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ABSTRACT

Nine European Community Member States (Belgium, Germany, France, Greece, Ireland, Luxembourg, Portugal, Spain, and United Kingdom) conducted national studies that involved case studies of quality assurance in continuing education. Analysis of findings indicated that many firms regarded continuing training as a central instrument for achieving economic goals and as an investment. Two different forms of cooperation between firms and training providers were identified. Large enterprises systematically planned, designed, implemented, and evaluated their personnel advancement and continuing training procedures as an integral part of corporate strategy. Small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) were dependent for their planning and quality assurance needs on external help. The burden of quality control was increasingly passing from the customers to the suppliers of continuing training. Training institutions had to be able to verify the quality of their offerings credibly. Quality assurance methods would contribute to improved continuing training if the formal training requirements were given a teaching-related content and SMEs received external help from training providers. In addition, self-assessment should be encouraged, and the technical side of learning and teaching should be evaluated. (An appendix contains summaries of the status and future prospects of quality assurance in continuing training in the countries studied.) (YLB)

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QUALITY ASSURANCE IN IN-HOUSE CONTINUING TRAINING

Case studies from Europe

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Eckart Severing / Thomas Stahl

Quality assurance in in-house continuing training - Case studies from Europe

Synthesis report from case studies on quality assurance in in-house continuing training from nine Member States of the European Union, commissioned by the Task Force Human Resources of the European Commission

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0. Quality assurance in in-house continuing training - case studies from Europe

0.1 Preliminary remarks on the institutionalization and course of the project

In many Member States of the European Union, an intensive debate has been in progress for some years with regard to quality management and quality assurance in vocational and in-house continuing training. With the rapid quantitative growth of the continuing training sector, and the new strategic importance of continuing vocational training for social and economic progress in the Member States, questions about the *quality of continuing training* have become of prime importance. These questions are no longer of interest only to vocational instructors but also concern training and social policy.

The European Commission's Task Force Human Resources [TFHR] is following with keen attention the debate about the quality of continuing training in the Member States. In the European FORCE and EUROTECNET programmes, too, there are a number of projects concerned with quality assurance concepts in continuing in-house and vocational training.

It must be said, however, that although the debate on quality assurance in in-house continuing training is being conducted in parallel in the Member States of the European Union, no interchange of ideas is taking place between them. This separation is only partially attributable to the different structures of the continuing training systems, more so to the absence of technical transfer opportunities.

The idea of an intensive study of questions relating to quality assurance in continuing vocational training was born in 1993 as a Franco-German initiative, out of the "German-French Continuing Training Dialogue" sponsored by the European Commission in Lyons and Stuttgart. The participants in these conferences, recruited mainly from projects forming part of the FORCE and EUROTECNET programmes, produced, among other things, a draft proposal on the study and further development of approaches to quality assurance in the sector of continuing vocational (and especially in-house) training. The idea behind this was that such approaches may contribute to a general improvement in the quality of continuing training in Europe. As a consequence of the draft project, the representatives of the French and German governments on the "FORCE/EUROTECNET Advisory Committee" introduced in 1994 an initiative to establish a "Working Party on Quality Assurance". The Working Party was attached to the FORCE programme and was organized and managed by the Task Force Human Resources. As matters progressed, particular efforts were made - in conjunction with the representatives of the European Commission's Task Force Human Resources - by Mr Pierre Le Douaron of the French Ministry for Labour and Employment, Mr Georges Kintzelé representing the TFHR, and Mr Dieter Lellmann of the German Federal Ministry for Education, Science, Research and Technology to produce a feasible concept of the project idea. After the project outline had been presented in the FORCE/EUROTECNET Advisory Committee, it was decided to set up a steering group to cover this project, made up of the interested members of the Committee, who would guide and monitor the progress of the project. The Member States involved in the study appointed national experts to be responsible for data acquisition and the preparation of studies on quality assurance in continuing training in their respective national contexts. Acting as an expert committee, they were also to provide technical suggestions and expert reports to help determine the objectives of the European study. The representatives of

the social partners were represented both on the steering committee of the FORCE/EUROTECNET Advisory Committee and on the project expert group. Particularly at the planning phase of the project, their suggestions made many valuable contributions to the subsequent implementation. A number of sittings of the steering committee of the Advisory Committee defined the objectives of the project and prepared specifications on that basis to formulate the work to be done by the national experts and the German/French project teams.

Two fundamental constraints on the project mandate are significant:

1. The subject of the study is to be *"Quality assurance in continuing vocational training in and/or for firms"* - where external training providers are described.

2. The remit of the project is to ascertain the *current state* of quality assurance in work and, on the basis of the apparent trends, problems and opportunities for continuing training, to derive options for further activities by the Task Force Human Resources.

These terms of reference in themselves make it clear that the national experts are of central importance in the acquisition and documentation of cases and experience in their respective Member States. Within a very tight time frame, they were to make available data and assessments which, although they did not have to purport to be representative in the statistical sense, were nevertheless to give a reliable impression of the current situation and trends in quality assurance in continuing training for the European observer.

Within the steering committee and the expert group, it was rapidly agreed that the best method for obtaining access to the specific procedures and problems of firms

in this area was by way of case studies. The price consciously paid for the advantages of a qualitative case study was that, at the end of the day, the database would consist of a variegated mass of completely different cases, which would make comparative analysis more difficult. Standard proposals for the methodological design and subdivision of the national studies were intended to ensure their comparability without imposing any restrictions on freedom as far as content and weighting were concerned.

Since quality assurance in continuing training is still a relatively new area for the majority of firms and training providers in Europe, it was decided from the outset that no attempt should be made to obtain reports on the "average" firm or training provider. To this extent, the cases now available do not provide a representative sample of data on the status of the implementation of quality assurance in continuing training for European firms as a whole. They do, however, provide a very good representation of the current state of quality assurance in continuing training for innovative firms and training providers who are already active in this field. More on this in due course.

Each of the national studies contains from three to five illustrative cases of quality assurance by firms or for firms. The presentation of the cases is confined to actually effective mechanisms and methods of quality assurance in continuing training. Although reference is also made to methods in the planning or preparatory stage, the report as a whole deals with the actual state of quality assurance.

In the presentation of the cases, their intrinsic mode of action and their specific framework conditions are followed. They are not treated with reference to standardizing external standpoints. The result is to ensure that the objectives actually existing in each case

as regards quality assurance are taken into account.

All the national studies are structured on the following lines:

- *Introduction*: Status and classification of the selected cases. General remarks on the national context of quality assurance in continuing training.

- *Cases illustrating* the application of quality assurance methods to in-house continuing training and vocational training in institutions.

- *Outlook*: Assessment and evaluation by the national rapporteur on the further development of quality assurance in continuing training in the country under report.

The breakdown of the description within the individual case studies largely follows an optional catalogue presented in the *"Specification for the national stock-takes"* by the Technical Project Management":

1.	Presentation of the case study per se
1.1	What are the objectives of quality assurance? □ Interests of management, employees, instructors, trainees, etc. □ Criteria of the success/benefit of continuing training and its quantifiability □ Adaptation of what has been learnt to practical working conditions □ Increased employment, competitiveness, etc.
1.2	What methods of quality assurance are applied? □ Input evaluation, output evaluation, process evaluation □ Others

1.3 What methods of quality assurance are applied?

- ☐ Observation in the working situation
- ☐ Measurement of acceptance
- ☐ Participant survey
- ☐ Tests based on learning objectives, examination evaluation
- ☐ Feedback on the user situation (interaction between the working world and continuing training)
- ☐ Self-evaluation
- ☐ Others

1.3 What can be said about the effectiveness of quality assurance in the case described?

- ☐ Effects on firms
- ☐ Effects on employees
- ☐ Effects on training providers
- ☐ Other effects

2. Implications of the case described as regards continuing training in general and the continuing training market

- ☐ Relationship between customer and service provider
- ☐ Evolution of the continuing training supply
- ☐ Competition between providers of continuing training
- ☐ etc.

3. How do questions relating to the certification of quality and the standardization of quality standards play a part in continuing training in the case described?

- ☐ ISO standards, national standards
- ☐ Standards applied by providers and firms, other standards

4. To what extent can ideas, experiences and standardizations from the general quality assurance movement be adapted to continuing training in the case described?

The effect of the free choice of institutions and/or firms described in the case studies is that the cases cannot be representative, so that no general, empirical statements can be derived from them. They do however give an impression of the real mode of action of quality assurance methods in continuing vocational training, and provide indications as to current debates in the respective Member States, possible innovative trends and

possible developments at national and European level.

Over and above the case descriptions, the authors of the national studies provided expert assessments on further developments, problems and projects which are important for the field of quality assurance in continuing vocational training.

This summarizing report collates essential findings from the nine national studies, and tries to identify joint starting points and problems in quality assurance in continuing vocational and in-house training in the Member States concerned.

It thus pursues a dual objective:

- First, it documents and compares the quality assurance methods used in continuing in-house training in the participating countries with reference to empirical cases, as a way of helping to improve the transparency of continuing training systems.

- Secondly, it performs some initial preparatory work for the transfer of internationally usable quality assurance methods in continuing in-house training, which may serve to improve the compatibility of continuing training services in Europe.

0.2 Quality assurance projects in the European Union's training programmes

The theme of improved quality and quality management in connection with questions of continuing training has also been taken up in the European Union's programmes in recent years.

In addition to the case studies, therefore, experience

and material on the subject of the investigation were also available from the three Community programmes COMETT, EUROTECNET and FORCE. These show that quality assurance ideas in continuing training also play a part in previous projects under the European programme. Experience and starting points are already available here to serve as a basis for future activities.

- COMETT refers to its activities in the field of producing guidelines for improving the quality of various training measures. For example, *"Aquaforce"* represents an approach to quality assurance in university engineering courses, based on the EN ISO 9000 series of standards. *"Saturn"* is a quality guideline for home study courses or for "open" learning systems. The theme of quality assurance in training was discussed at a COMETT conference in Antwerp. A guideline for cooperation between universities and firms is to appear in 1995 as a follow-up activity.

- FORCE, too, can point to relevant experience at project level. This relates primarily to projects dealing with the relationship between Total Quality Management [TQM] and the EN ISO 9000 certification of firms and their innovations in the continuing training sector. Similarly, the theme of quality assurance and continuing training in the FORCE sector studies has a part to play. The study on "Contractual Policy" carried out under the auspices of FORCE also touches upon the theme of quality assurance in continuing training. The new forms of employee participation in the workplace, including involvement in the management of continuing training, and the questions of social partnership they encompass are also central questions of quality assurance in continuing training.

- The EUROTECNET programme includes projects in which questions of evaluation in continuing training are a central line of development. As in the case of FORCE,

there are many projects which deal with the relationship between innovative business organization, TQM and the resulting needs in continuing training. A number of publications have also dealt with questions of evaluation and quality assurance in in-house continuing training.

By way of conclusion to the previous work done by the TFHR in the area in question, reference may be made to a quality guideline on the preparation of materials for home study courses, based on TQM and drawn up by the association of European home study institutions [AECS] with the cooperation of the European Union's TFHR.

0.3 Data situation and a few general assessments of the results of the field work

Following the completion of the field work, nine studies are available from the following Member States:

- Belgium [BF]
- Germany [D]
- France [F]
- Greece [GR]
- Ireland [IRL]
- Luxembourg [L]
- Portugal [P]
- Spain [E]
- United Kingdom [UK]

The cases presented in the studies are in the form of a variegated mixture, corresponding to the various national systems, problem situations, objectives and focal points in continuing vocational training.

The subjects of the cases are:

- *Firms* (both large and small businesses from a wide

variety of industries)

- *Providers of continuing vocational training* (private and public training providers)

- *Associations* (employer associations, industry associations, associations of training providers, etc.).

Objectives and approaches in quality assurance also differ widely between the various cases.

- In many cases, quality assurance in continuous training is described as *systematic planning* and in-house implementation of continuing training. In other words, the objective is to integrate continuing training into strategic company aims and their implementation. The overall process, ranging from training needs analysis through planning and implementation of continuing training measures to evaluation, is restructured from quality aspects. This sector of in-house training management is encountered in many of the cases described.

- In some cases the *preparation of a specification* on the overall process of continuing in-house training, on the part of the training provider or on individual measures, is described as an example of quality assurance in continuing training. In these cases, the specification serves as an instrument of systematic in-house training management, or as a market-structuring instrument for a list of requirements to be met by external training providers.

- Quality assurance in continuing training is presented in some of the in-house cases as *"training controlling"*, in other words as an attempt to improve the economy of continuing training activities.

- In other cases the *evaluation of a specific continuing*

training measure is presented as an approach to quality assurance.

- For some cases in the private training provider sector, quality assurance is understood as a *"marketing measure"*.

- The aspect of *consumer protection* of those with a need for continuing training (individuals or firms) is the focus of some cases of governmental intervention into quality assurance in continuing training.

The plurality of objectives, approaches and areas of activity of quality assurance in continuing training also makes it clear that the case studies from the Member States are largely pilot projects and model undertakings which, to date, are by no means representative in themselves of continuing training systems or for all European enterprises.

On the other hand, a high degree of convergence and a number of overlaps and parallels exist both within the various cases and in the expert opinions on general lines of development and the problem areas of quality assurance in continuing training.

0.4 General development trends in the cases considered; general assessments by the national experts

In all Member States, there is a clear trend towards propagating and generalizing quality assurance in continuing training in its various fields of application.

Although many of the examples are pilot projects, which play a preparatory role in the Member States, it is clear that the introduction and processing of quality assurance

systems in continuing training are becoming more important both to firms and to training providers:

- The firms are increasingly recognizing *the continuing training of their employees as being an investment* in human resources. In conjunction with the awareness of the increasing strategic importance of human resources potential for the competitiveness of businesses, the question of quality assurance in the continuing training sector is acquiring a completely new significance. Continuing training, in all its facets, is becoming a critical factor for a firm's success, in terms of both cost and benefit. Correspondingly, efforts to optimize quality assurance are becoming of greater and greater interest for all firms.

  However, the experts also report that in those companies which have not hitherto grasped the fact that continuing training is a vital factor for their success, the concept of quality assurance in continuing training is, naturally, also an unfamiliar idea. In these cases, making the firms aware of the situation is a precondition for everything that follows.

  The various efforts made by firms in recent years to *ensure the quality of their products, services and internal procedures* necessarily lead on, in a second stage, to considerations of quality assurance in continuing training. Irrespective of whether firms are certified under the EN ISO 9000 series of standards or under other national standards, as regards the quality of their business procedures, or whether they aim to implement Total Quality Management [TQM] methods, individual employees and their continuing training always play a central role in modern procedures to improve operational quality. In many of the cases presented from the Member States, therefore, it becomes clear that companies have been made aware of the significance of quality assurance in continuing training by

certification of general procedures and structures under the EN ISO 9000 series. Since the need to obtain certification affects an ever-increasing number of firms (directly, as suppliers to firms which have already been certified, or indirectly through market processes), such sensitization processes may be expected to increase further, with consequences both for the content and for the quality assurance of in-house continuing training.

- Another boost to the increasing importance of quality assurance in continuing training has been provided by *government legislative initiatives to protect the consumer in continuing training*. This aspect becomes apparent in some of the case studies from the Member States. To supplement market mechanisms in the continuing training market, some of the Member States are trying, by way of laws and regulations, to strengthen the position of customers for continuing training (whether they be individuals or firms) as against those supplying it. These attempts, too, reflect the desire to increase the overall quality of continuing vocational training, to improve market transparency and to offer customers for continuing training a degree of security when purchasing continuing training services.

- It is apparent from many of the cases described that, and how, quality assurance in continuing training is increasingly perceived by the *external providers* as the *effect of pressure from the firms requesting it*. Even the more traditional operators in the provision of continuing training are being forced by increasingly specific requirements from the firms to introduce customer-oriented services which result in new service procedures and, overall, require their activities to be subjected to more intensive quality assurance measures which are more transparent for the client. Mere marketing promises about "tailor-made continuing training" are no longer sufficient. Well-informed firms are

increasingly demanding individually designed continuing training services. This demand does not only relate to the implementation of the training measures. Their adaptation to particular operational needs requires both preliminary services (needs analyses, designing of innovative contents and methods) and follow-up methods of evaluating the effects and efficiency of the training measure in question. In the interests of succeeding in the market place, training providers will have to resort to appropriate quality assurance measures, to the extent of obtaining certification for their whole organization.

These trends towards the spread of quality assurance in continuing vocational training in Europe find expression *in different forms*. The cases described from the Member States exhibit, here again, a comprehensive spectrum of different phenomena. The following forms are mentioned repeatedly:

- Quality assurance in continuing training is incorporated as *strategic integration of continuing vocational training* into all targeting and planning procedures within the firm. Continuing training is regarded as an investment and optimized by appropriate quality assurance procedures.

- Other cases describe *systematic planning and implementation procedures for continuing training* in the firm as quality assurance. Continuing training management or "l'ingénierie de la formation" [training engineering] would be the concepts for this procedure.

- In connection with the two preceding forms, or independently of them, the preparation of *specifications for the implementation of continuing training* are described as quality assurance in continuing training. These specifications relate in part to internal training events, but they are also drawn up by the firms as

specifications for training providers.

- In other cases *"training controlling"* is treated as a form of quality assurance in continuing training. The main emphasis here is on questions of making continuing training more efficient and economical. It constitutes an attempt to quantify the costs and benefits of continuing vocational training in monetary terms, analogously to other operating factors, and to optimize them accordingly.

- In various cases, the aspect of *employee participation* at all levels of the continuing training process plays a central part in quality assurance in continuing vocational training. On the same lines as recent models of TQM, the primary emphasis is on direct participation and involvement for all those concerned in the training process.

- In most cases, emphasis is laid on the fact that an essential criterion of quality assurance in continuing training comprises successfully *transferring what has been learnt to the workplace*. Accordingly, the efforts made revolve around optimizing this transfer.

- In a few cases, quality assurance centres on the question of the *evaluation of continuing training* in its various aspects. In these cases, attention is paid to evaluation criteria, parameters, methods and instruments.

- Some cases are characterized by the efforts of the firms or training providers to obtain a *certificate of successful quality assurance* for their continuing training activities. In line with standards laid down externally (national requirements, EN ISO 9000 et seq, etc.), efforts at quality assurance are aimed at meeting these standards and carrying out appropriate audits.

The illustrative cases in the national studies also describe in detail a number of other forms of quality assurance, and a great many combinations of the forms listed above.

The fact that the collection of cases relating to quality assurance in continuing training is so disparate naturally raises questions of how the term should be defined. What is certain is that, in present-day continuing training practice, very different procedures and concepts are subsumed under quality assurance.

This has two consequences for our further procedure:

1. The present stocktake is more representative of cases of quality improvement in continuing training than, in the narrower sense, cases of specific quality assurance or the evaluation of vocational training content.

2. On the other hand, the stocktake reflects the fact that continuing training practice, for both firms and training providers, is initially concerned with developing suitable approaches to quality assurance. This means that it may be premature to adapt, unthinkingly, a quality assurance concept from production sectors to continuing training; there is still development work to be done here.

Even as regards the present situation of continuing training in Europe, the national experts believe that *important effects* are being produced by the existing approaches to quality assurance.

- Even today, quality assurance methods are bringing about a number of *innovations in continuing training*. These innovations relate to the organization of the further training (employee participation, systematic planning, etc.), they relate to continuing training

methods (job-related forms of learning, coaching, self-teaching, etc.) and they relate to the content of the further training (social competences, multiskill aspects, etc.).

- Even today, the approaches to quality assurance in continuing training are resulting in *changes in the continuing training market*. The external training providers are increasingly being forced to offer customer-oriented services, and tailor-made service for firms and individual participants is increasingly becoming a reality.

- Even today, again, there are signs of *rationalization of the continuing training economy*. Firms perceive continuing training as an investment whose cost/benefit ratio has to be optimized. The continuing training personnel are creating systems for their own work and trying to find cost-effective solutions. Professionalization of continuing training is resulting in the identification of continuing training services and the corresponding prices.

- Companies are increasingly recognizing the systematic use of continuing employee training as a *competitive necessity*.

- There is a growing *demand for specific offers of certification* in the sector of continuing training quality assurance. In the long term, training providers in many Member States will be unable to escape certification procedures under external quality standards if they hope to become established in the market. Both in-house continuing training departments and, especially, the private and some of the public training providers are increasingly striving for ways of demonstrating the quality of their products, their processes and their organization as a whole. Both marketing aspects and attempts to improve internal effectiveness

provide a motive for this.

0.5 List and rough classification of the cases

0.5.1 List and classification by Member States

In an initial overview, the case studies can be classified as follows by countries of origin and institutions providing the continuing training:

Member State	Firms	Public providers	Private providers	Association of firms	Association of providers	Others	Total by States
Belgium (Flemish)	2	3	1	1	-	-	7
Germany	-	2	-	-	1	2	5
France	4	1	1	-	-	-	6
Greece	2	1	1	1	-	-	5
Ireland	4	-	-	-	-	-	4
Luxembourg	2	1	1	-	-	-	4
Portugal	2	1	1	1	1	-	6
Spain	2	1	-	1	1	1	6
United Kingdom	3	1	-	-	-	-	4
Total by providers	21	11	5	4	3	3	47

However, the allocation of the cases to the categories shown must be relativized as follows:

- In many cases, more than one institution is involved - for example, one firm and one training provider. As a rule, these cases were classified as designated by the national experts.

- The different national contexts provide differing functional splits in the public provider sector. For example, in some Member States the government labour agencies are also providers of training, while in others they are not, etc..

- Associations act as training providers in some cases, whereas in others they act merely as bodies providing quality assurance in continuing training.

Nevertheless, even this quite approximate classification makes it clear that ...

- we have case studies covering different subjects of quality assurance, and

- in the light of their national backgrounds, the experts have chosen different focal points in describing the cases.

0.5.2 The firms as the subject of the case descriptions

In classifying the cases by size of enterprise and by sector (N.A.C.E) we find:

#	*Sector*	*Large enterprise*	*SME*
8.2	Chemical raw materials	3	-
8.3	Metal working	4	1
8.4	Processing (non-metallic)	-	5
8.5	Construction	1	-
8.7	Transport, communication	1	-
8.8	Banking, finance	1	-
8.9	Services	1	4
	Total	*11*	*10*

In those cases where enterprises which are not training providers appear as subjects of quality assurance in continuing training, there is a virtually even break between large enterprises and the small and medium-size enterprises [SMEs]. This, of course, is certainly not attributable to the fact that SMEs are particularly active in the sector of quality assurance in continuing training - the reverse being true. The experts tried to include these SME cases in order to highlight the special features of quality assurance in continuing training for small enterprises. The distribution of the enterprises over the sectors merely suggests that the subject of quality assurance in continuing training is included in

all sectors.

0.5.3 The training providers as the subject of case descriptions

When the training facilities described in the case studies are classified by the provision of training by the respective institution, the picture is as follows:

Type of training institution	*Number of cases*
Government training providers	9
Training providers from associations of enterprises	5
Private training providers	3
Associations of training providers	2
Training providers of employer associations	1
Union training providers	1

- All nine studies provide documentation of quality assurance in continuing training which is undertaken by *government or government-controlled institutions* in the continuing training sector. It can be assumed that in most cases the government departments function simultaneously as customers, training providers and a monitoring authority for continuing training. In some cases, however, they appear in only one of these capacities.

- Cases which seem particularly interesting are the five in which training providers are pursuing their efforts to provide quality assurance in continuing vocational training as *representatives of an association of enterprises*. Four of these providers are pursuing a sectoral approach (they originate from an industry association of companies), while one is concerned specifically with SMEs.

- Quality assurance as an initiative of an association of

training providers can be conceived as an impetus to professionalization and self-monitoring in the continuing training sector.

0.4.4 Thematic focal points of the case descriptions

With reference to the requirements laid down by the steering group of the FORCE/EUROTECNET Advisory Committee, Chapters 1 to 4 of the present report deal with the analytical focal points of the study by referring to the contributions made by the various cases. Since some of the analytical focal points run transversely to the case descriptions, clear allocations are possible only in a very few cases. Cases which, for example, deal with the management of continuing training in a large enterprise simultaneously contain descriptions of joint projects with external training providers, offer indications of changes in the continuing training market and improvements to be achieved in continuing vocational training, etc.

Similarly, the following breakdown includes multiple mentions of the cases reported:

Cases from:	*Enterprises*	*Providers*	*Others*
Quality management of in-house continuing training	20	14	2
Quality assurance in cooperation between firms and providers	21	26	13
Quality assurance and structuring of the continuing training market	11	15	14
Quality assurance and improved quality in continuing vocational training	21	11	10

In particular, the focal points "market development" and "improved continuing training" naturally depend primarily on the expert's comments on the cases. This also means

that the assessments and final analyses of these experts are incorporated into the chapters concerned.

The case studies treat quality assurance in all thematic focal areas as an integrated element of the organization and implementation of continuing training, not as a separate, imposed procedure. To this extent, it is clear that the cases are considering the *aspect* of quality assurance in continuing vocational training, and not quality evaluation methods as such.

1. Quality assurance and quality management of in-house continuing training

1.0 Preliminary remarks

Continuing in-house training in the Member States of the European Union has achieved unprecedented dimensions. It is an essential factor in the attraction of Europe as a location for business activities. The development and application of modern quality management and quality assurance methods in continuing in-house training, however, have not kept pace with this expansion. Existing initial approaches to a systematic evaluation and quality assurance in continuing in-house training are at odds with their immense cost and increased importance.

Only recently did Europe embark on an intensive discussion of quality management and success evaluation in continuing in-house training, the monitoring of training and the organizational framework conditions for quality assurance. In this discussion, quality management is no longer understood as quality control of individual training methods but as a global concept accompanying the process, including ascertainment of needs and planning in the preliminary stage together with the evaluation of the practical implementation of the training syllabus. The important role attributed by the case studies from the nine Member States to the application of ISO Standards 9000 et seq. for the quality management of continuing in-house training is reflected by this new perception.

The description which follows summarizes case studies on quality assurance in continuing in-house training at and by firms. It therefore relates primarily to those cases from the national studies which include continuing training measures or strategies directly implemented by firms or commissioned by them, and not those cases

relating to continuing vocational training in government or public facilities. Cases which deal with the special features of joint efforts by companies and external training providers are discussed in [Chapter 2].

The discussion is based on the following individual case studies by firms:

#	Name	Country	Sector	Work force	CT Dept.
UK4	Hays Chemical Distribution Ltd	United Kingdom	Chemical	SMEs	yes
E3	G.INI-TENEQ	Spain	Association of public enterprises		yes
UK1	Bowles Outdoor Centre	United Kingdom	Outdoor education	16	no
IRL1	?	Ireland	Food processing	32	no
F3	Raymond Geoffroy	France	Preserves	36	no
F2	CELIT-France	France	Industrial filters	50	no
UK3	Walker Financial Solution Ltd.	United Kingdom	DP system house	80	yes
IRL4	?	Ireland	Health care products	123	yes
P5	Coopers & Lybrand	Portugal	Management consultancy	278	no/yes
UK2	Cleveland Ambulance NHS Trust	United Kingdom	Ambulance Service	296	no
IRL3	?	Ireland	Printing and paper	325	yes
IRL2	?	Ireland	Food producer	370	yes
L4	Du Pont de Nemours	Luxembourg	Chemical	1,270	yes
BF1	ATEA NV.	Belgium (Fl.)	Electronics, communication technology	1,500	yes
GR2	Elefsis Shipyards S.A.	Greece	Shipbuilding	2,000	yes
P1	Renault Portugal	Portugal	Car industry	2,300	yes
L1	ARBED	Luxembourg	Metal production	8,000	yes
E4	Dragados y Construcciones S.A.	Spain	Building	12,000	yes
GR3	Bank of Greece	Greece	Banking	14,000	yes
F1	SOLLAC	France	Iron smelting, metallurgy	20,000	yes
E5	Telfonica en Espagne S.A.	Spain	Telecommunications	73,000	yes

In addition, it also relates to a number of case studies of certifying organizations or training providers who work in close conjunction with an enterprise. The status of quality assurance in continuing in-house training by the application of ISO EN 9000 et seq., as documented in many cases, in explained in a separate digression [cf. Chapter E].

It should be noted, however, that features in common between the case studies of continuing in-house training do not justify an assumption that the same features exist in the majority of European firms. As a result of the

procedure used to select the firms of the case studies - the intention being to describe examples of effective quality assurance - the presentation is restricted to firms active in continuing training. Thus all those described in the *British* study have received a national quality award and attribute their market success to the intensity of their continuing training measures. The two large *Greek* enterprises dealt with in the case studies are considered in Greece as pioneers of systematic in-house training. In the Luxembourg study, reference is expressly made to the innovative part played by the cases. Etc. However, the fact that the firms presented in the case studies are largely described as *pioneers* in their field of innovative models of continuing in-house training at least expresses a need which is also regarded as existing for those firms which have not hitherto systematically planned or evaluated training. But because the cases are neither representative nor described in the light of uniform criteria, this summarizing study cannot permit itself to engage in any quantitative comparison or draw any conclusions about the status of quality assurance across the spectrum of the firms. This study reflects an impression of objectives, organization, methods and instruments of quality assurance in continuing in-house training. In particular, it will show in which areas the *requirements* to be met by quality management and quality assurance in continuing in-house training are *identical* throughout many European States.

1.1 Continuing training as a business investment

In the national studies on quality assurance in continuing in-house training, it is consistently reported that the firms' attitudes to the continuing training of their employees have changed.

In a number of case studies which specifically relate to

in-house qualification measures, and also in a number of other case studies whose subject is the interaction of training providers and firms, the following attitudes are described:

- continuing in-house training is regarded as an essential means for achieving the firm's economic objectives, and no longer primarily as a social service or benefit for the workforce.

- Accordingly, it is not provided or bought in as a peripheral service but integrated into the strategic business plan and so designed to suit the individual firm,

- and the barriers formerly existing between the production and qualification processes are tending to come down: work and learning are more closely interlinked; greater importance is being attached to continuity of learning in line with a constantly changing production process. Qualification is no longer determined on technical grounds alone but relates to the production process as a whole: "transverse qualification", "global continuing training", "hybrid qualification" are key phrases characterizing this viewpoint.

In brief: continuing employee training is regarded in many of the European firms described in the case studies as an essential *investment* to secure competitiveness and is *planned* and *evaluated* accordingly.

This concept is explicitly expressed as being a national goal of training policy in the *British* study by the use of the term "investors in people". The government and various industrial associations adopted a joint programme whereby 50% of medium-sized to large enterprises will, by 1996, be recognized by independent auditors as "investors in people". This recognition requires the firms to link their business objectives closely to the continuing training and personal development of their employees and to plan and evaluate their in-house continuing training systematically [UK].

As the *Irish* study summarizes it: "A common theme runs through all case studies. It is that the development of staff plus increased employee involvement and customer focus in all aspects of business is the key to quality and competitiveness. ... The value of training and the training function as a tool for competitiveness is constantly underlined in this study." The study refers in particular to the role of continuing training as a "change agent" within the firm [IRL].

This attitude to continuing training is also encountered in small enterprises such as *CELIT-France*: "Training expenditure thus represented only 0.6% of the wages bill. Since 1987, training has been perceived as a fully fledged investment, and the corresponding expenditure is now about 5%, following peak years in which it rose to 9% (1988, 1989) of the wages bill." [F3] (cf. also [F1] and [F3]).

In discussing the *ARBED* and *Du Pont* cases, the *Luxembourg* study offers the following summary:
"In both cases described, the needs to be met derive from translating the enterprises' operational and strategic objectives into action plans calling for clearly defined qualifications and so generating an approach whereby the existing qualifications are adapted to the target qualifications through individualized training plans. In the two selected enterprises, the approach adopted comprises a precise definition of the objectives to be achieved by training, developing a continuous monitoring system during the implementation of the programme and, subsequently, assessing the results achieved. In both cases, training is clearly defined as an investment and those responsible for training act as training consultants" [L1, L4]. This, however, is not in line with the status of quality assurance in the majority of firms in Luxembourg, where the strategic importance of continuing training is frequently unrecognized as yet.

As regards *Dragados y Construcciones*, Pedro Cordova in the *Spanish* study maintains: "The outlook has now broadened. In accordance with the principles of Total Quality, Training has to be planned like any other production process, and it is necessary for a system of evaluation to be organized for each stage, after the needs have been identified, until the acquired knowledge is applied in the workplace. The evaluation has to be planned and applied at every stage of a process. This makes it possible to maintain permanent monitoring of the training process and its results and to ensure its quality" [E3] (cf. also [E2]).

To what extent practical consequences arise from this new concept of the role of continuing in-house training, which can be identified in virtually all case studies of firms, seems to depend partly on general framework conditions of training and economic policy, but partly directly on the size of the firms.

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- The documented cases from large firms all show evidence of systematic planning and evaluation of training; to some extent, undertaking this task is actually the primary function of an in-house training system, while the carrying-out of continuing training is delegated to specialist departments or external providers.

- Small and medium-sized enterprises, by contrast, operate their continuing training on more of an informal basis and in the light of short-term definitions of needs. If the sample of the case studies is followed, it is only in exceptional cases and specific sectors with high qualification requirements (data processing [UK3], business consultancy [P5], medical services [UK2]) that continuing training is pre-planned and evaluated in a more systematic manner.

1.2 The objectives of quality assurance in in-house continuing training

The effect of regarding continuing in-house training as an investment is that many case studies deal with systematic planning of in-house training as a contribution to quality assurance in continuing training. An essential criterion for quality in continuing training is regarded here as integration into strategic operating objectives and their implementation. Training management in the firm is described and assessed, in these cases, from economic and business strategy quality standpoints.

In these cases, the focus is not on the individual training measure and its quality but on the organization and course of continuing in-house training as a whole, proceeding from the determination and analysis of demand through concept development to implementation and evaluation.

A common feature of these cases lies in the fact that quality assurance relates, primarily, not to the content, theory or methods of the continuing training measures but to their *function* for the overall strategy of the enterprise. Quality standards in teaching apply not per se but indirectly: in the assessment of the efficiency of the continuing training in terms of the firm's success.

The *Bowles Outdoor Centre*, United Kingdom, formally offered only travel and outdoor recreation. The centre has now switched its products to management qualification schemes combined with outdoor experience. The decisive strategic factor behind the reorientation of the centre was the continuing training of the 16 employees. The overriding criterion of quality assurance in continuing training, therefore, was how far and at what speed the product switch took place [UK1].

Walker Financial Solutions Ltd., a DP systems house in the United Kingdom, pursues essential objectives of company strategy through the continuing training of its employees. They include improving employee motivation, reducing staff turnover, and adapting the workforce to the rapid pace of technological change. The evaluation of continuing training is thus directly associated with the recording of business management parameters such as individual productivity or the turnover rate [UK3].

Quality assurance at *Elefsis Shipyards S.A.*, Greece, "is absolutely determined by the interests of the enterprise towards the growth of its productivity and the strengthening of its competitiveness as well as toward the minimization of the work accidents" [GR2].

In the *French* metal energy group *SOLLAC*, planned restructuring measures and an attempt to improve the economics of continuing training were the factors that led to the desire for quality assurance [F1].

At *ARBED* in *Luxembourg*, the decentralization of spectral analysis is the objective of quality assurance in continuing training: "The case analysed relates to a training programme organized following the decentralization of the spectral analysis activity in the various production centres. The existing 'spectral analyses' department has been reduced to a nucleus of individuals who, in particular, supervise the correct use of the spectroanalysis technology in the various production centres. The decentralization of this activity forms part of a general policy of restructuring and product-based decentralization at ARBED, and the approach to training is in direct line with the general continuing training procedure developed by ARBED in 1993, and in accordance with ISO 9000" [L1].

A medium-sized *Irish food producer* measures the results of continuing training "through changes in the departmental output, cost, defect rates, absenteeism, turnover, productivity rates and a wide level of evidence in cultural change" [IRL2].

There are many possible target categories in continuing in-house training: for example the satisfaction or

learning success of participants, the improvement of instructional methods and media, the optimization of training costs, ensuring successful practical transfer or changes to organization structures. In the cases documented, most of the objectives mentioned are those directly related to the economic success of the firms:

- measurement of the success of continuing training which can be calculated in cash terms

- cost reduction in continuing training

- quality assurance of the end product or service, reject reduction

- making in-house procedures more effective and improving internal communication

- marketing relations with customers

- measuring the increase in the individual productivity of the workforce (by ensuring know-how transfer, better motivation, lower turnover, better working environment, etc.)

- selection of external training providers and improving their services

Conversely, the achievement of these objectives - though it may depend on a number of other factors - is regarded as an important indicator of the quality of continuing in-house training.

Certification of quality management under the EN ISO 9000 series of standards is used in many case studies as a target parameter for the in-house training system too. In addition, the descriptions devote extensive space to business management procedures which attempt to assess continuing training in cost/benefit terms. By contrast,

teaching-related or learning-psychology methods of evaluation are mentioned - if at all - only as a prerequisite for an economic assessment.

1.3 Quality assurance by systematic planning of continuing training

Continuing in-house training comprises more than just the organizing of courses. A large number of essential preparatory and follow-up activities also have to be regarded as part of continuing training, although these activities are often less defined and independently organized than the actual training measures. Accordingly, a perception of quality assurance in continuing in-house training which is reduced to mere evaluation of instruction falls short of what is necessary. Quality assurance in continuing training is only effective if it encompasses all phases of the training process, starting with the initial planning and continuing through to the application of what has been learnt.

The following starting points for quality assurance in continuing training can be distinguished:

If the elements of quality assurance in all cases of continuing in-house training are broken down and arranged in a sequential relationship, the result is a *control loop* of quality assurance in continuing in-house training. In some cases, individual elements are emphasized to different extents - which may be because of the cases themselves or because of the weighting given in the presentation; but quality assurance is always designed as a continuously effective process and not as a specific measure.

1. Quality assurance in continuing training is not only concerned with optimizing the actual training measures. In the preparatory period, quality assurance in continuing in-house training includes, in particular, questions of *training needs analysis*. In many of the cases documented, cooperative models of needs analysis are used: in these cases, potential participants and/or executives are brought in even at this early stage (explicitly in F1, F2, F3, IRL: all, L1, L4, P1, UK: all).

2. In the *conception* of continuing training measures, great importance attaches to adaptation to special in-house needs. Quality assurance in continuing in-house training is a medium for this adaptation. In these cases there are signs of a trend away from standard courses towards "tailor-made" seminars and forms of workplace-based continuing training. In-house technical and management staff often help to plan the structure of training measures. This takes account of in-house conditions and the financial and human resources available to the firms (explicitly in F1, F2, F3, IRL: all, P1, P2, UK1, UK4).

3. In some of the cases described, the *implementation* of the continuing training measures is subjected to an on-going assessment, for example in the form of supervision of instruction or occasional surveys of lecturers or participants. In the majority of cases, quality assurance is based on the results of evaluations at the end of the implementation phase. The practical transfer of what has been learnt is in many cases the focal point of an assessment of in-house continuing training. In some cases, not only the continuing training but also the final assessment takes place within the working process. In these cases, the purpose of the assessment is to relate

contents and methods as closely as possible to the requirements of particular jobs.

4. In some cases, the *optimization* of continuing training on the basis of the results of the training demand analysis and the assessment is described as an independent phase of the continuing training organization, while in others it is incidental. New standards for the planning, design and implementation of further continuing training measures are derived from the results of the assessment, and implemented. In many cases, however, optimization relates not only to the training measures themselves: questions are often asked about the contribution made by quality assurance in continuing training to the development of the firm's workforce and organization. Therefore, particular attention is also devoted in the case studies to the organizational aspects of continuing in-house training, and consideration is given to how the planning and evaluation of training are linked to the management of the firm.

1.4 Those involved in quality assurance in in-house continuing training

The firms described in the case studies have a training department of their own and/or cooperate with external training providers [cf. in this connection Chapter 2].

In its relationship to the firm's other units, an in-house training department is traditionally seen in terms of an *internal but separate provider of courses*: the continuing training department receives reports on training needs from the technical and production departments, and designs appropriate courses which are given by its own or external lecturers and attended by participants of their own volition or as a result of being selected by their superiors. To this extent, the internal training department is regarded by the technical and

production departments as similar to an external training provider.

The *National Bank of Greece S.A.* maintains a "training division, that systematically develops and implements continuing vocational training activities for its personnel". The planning and evaluation of training are largely a matter for the training management [GR3].

Elefsis Shipyards S.A. also has its own separate training department, which is responsible "for the planning and the implementation of in-company training and continuing vocational training activities that carry out mainly through its technical training centre [sic]". The continuing training is planned without any direct influence by the technical departments on the in-house training system [GR2].

The *French* iron smelting group *SOLLAC* has a personnel department of its own in which the plans for continuing training of employees are worked out. This, too, is where decisions are taken on whether to carry out the training measures in house or to buy them in from external providers [F1].

The *French* motor group *Renault* is described as a case in which the central continuing training department is increasingly delegating its powers to the group's works, where the various departments now plan continuing training, carry it out or buy it in on a decentralized basis. Central personnel development supports this process by providing specifications, etc. [F4].

The innovation is described in very similar terms at the *Luxembourg* steel producer *ARBED*. Central personnel development supports and advises the departments, which independently determine the demand for training and arrange suitable measures [L1].

Quality assurance in continuing in-house training is arranged in these cases by various in-house *actors*: in the majority of cases it is initiated and implemented by the training and personnel departments themselves, while in some cases this is done by the management of the firm and in rare cases by the participants' superiors or by the participants themselves.

- *Quality assessment by the in-house training department* generally leads to the results being reflected directly - and therefore quickly - in quality improvements to the continuing training measures. It is also possible to infer from the instruments and methods used for assessment in the corresponding case studies that the emphasis is on work-related criteria. But the organization of in-house training work separately from produc-

tion also brings specific difficulties for quality assurance in continuing training: although instruction may be assessed in the internal sector of the training department, quality assurance can hardly extend as far as the application of the knowledge and the actual jobs. So although questions can be asked on reproducible syllabuses at the end of courses, the transfer of the qualifications to the working process remains largely unconsidered. The evaluation of courses is largely excluded from the determination of this practical transfer; how knowledge is applied at the workplace after the completion of a course is generally outside its horizon. Consequently, it is generally concluded from the learning success or satisfaction of the participants - in other words from the *verifiable reproduction* of the content of the courses by the participants or from *participant surveys* on the course - that application of what has been learnt in vocational practice will probably be successful.

The organizational identity of those responsible for implementation and quality in continuing training permits or encourages, in some cases, a relatively informal basis for quality assurance: "The effectiveness of the used training evaluation activities and their impacts on the quality improvement of the developed and implemented training are being appraised by the training management on an informal basis" [GR2]. The situation at the National Bank of Greece SA is very similar: here again the Training Division has sole responsibility for quality assurance matters, and the bank too has "not yet established an integrated formal operational system for the quality assurance of its training activities" [GR3].

- One aspect of *quality assurance by management* is that it is not just the individual training measure that is reviewed but, incidently as it were, the functioning of the entire training department. Another is that there is more emphasis on criteria of company strategy and economics: in many cases, continuing in-house training is indirectly measured in terms of secondary effects on productivity and profit, and other business management parameters. By contrast, there is less emphasis on intervention based on the content and style of training.

- *Quality assurance in continuing training by the supervisors of the participants* emphasizes, in most of the documented cases, the successful transfer into practice of what has been learnt in the training measures; however, it is not always a simple matter to guarantee that the results produce a feedback effect in the separate training department. In addition, in the process of evaluation within in-house hierarchical structures, questions of quality assurance in continuing training may become confused with questions relating to individual assessment of personnel, or personnel selection. In these cases, the participation of lecturers and participants in continuing training is, naturally, often neglected. The reliability of the assessment and the effectiveness of subsequent quality assurance measures may suffer from possible overlaps with internal conflicts of interest.

- In some of the cases, *self-evaluation by the participants* was encouraged as the starting point for quality assurance in continuing in-house training. In these instances, the participants' opinion influences the quality assurance process through evaluation instruments such as participant questionnaires or quality discussions between participants and lecturers [cf. Section 1.3.1]. However, in none of the documented cases are the participants in training measures directly involved in decisions regarding the optimization of quality in continuing training. This seems striking, especially in those in-house continuing training programmes which purport to promote the independence and sense of responsibility of the participants yet, for quality assurance purposes, prefer methods of outside control to self-assessment and independent activity by the participants. Ultimately, it can be assumed that the participants in continuing training are themselves best placed to judge the utility of a qualification for their working activities.

A notable exception is the case of *Du Pont de Nemours* from *Luxembourg*. The company endeavours to reduce formalized quality assurance processes at all levels and, instead, to strengthen the employees' independent sense of responsibility. Independent discipline is encouraged, rather than imposed discipline. The same applies to processes of optimization in continuing training [L4].

Most of the documented cases are hybrid forms. For example, methods of participant self-assessment are often combined with assessment by the training department, or decision makers from other in-house departments (Personnel, Controlling) are balanced against results of assessment within the training system.

Walker Financial Solutions Ltd., United Kingdom, integrates the personnel assessment, which takes place regularly every three months, into the continuing training evaluation: "Following the training or development activity the manager and individual or group meet to assess whether the objectives have been achieved. Subsequent performance is assessed through observation by the individual's line manager and self evaluation. All employees have a performance review every three months based on measurable objectives. During the reviews an evaluation takes place to establish the degree of business benefit achieved through previous training or development activities. Evaluation results are recorded on employee training records and areas for improvement are noted." The documentation of the case does not reveal how reliable a self-evaluation is which is directly linked to external assessments in the internal hierarchy [UK3].

This also applies to other SMEs. In the *French* case of *Raymond Geoffray*, the evaluation of continuing training is a problem child. Apart from measurements of the degree of acceptance during the actual continuing training measure, the main approach comprises informal, personal inquiries by the owner: "What have you learnt?" etc. In the specific case of SMEs this kind of direct communication, backed up by other self-assessment methods, may be a way of solving the evaluation problem, if the owner is sufficiently well briefed on such matters [F3].

Renault in *Portugal* has a complete arsenal of evaluation methods. Elements of self-assessment are selectively combined with observations by superiors and studies by external experts. Evaluation covers both the measure itself and its transfer into practical application [P1].

The case of the *Spanish* company *Dragados y Construcciones* is comparable. In this case, particular weight attaches to the evaluation of the learning process itself [E4].

1.5 Quality assurance in practical application

The question of the practical relevance of continuing training arises on the basis of the separation of the sphere of continuing training from the pursuit of a profession. This separation makes it possible to structure the continuing training in accordance with didactic criteria rather than merely productivity-oriented ones. It does, however, involve the risk that the contents and methods of in-house continuing training may become remote from the qualification requirements of the working world. Ensuring that the results of qualification measures are suitable for practical application is, therefore, the essential core of quality assurance in in-house continuing training. The successful transfer of what has been learnt into practice is, in the documented cases, the essential quality feature of in-house continuing training.

In most cases, what is assessed is not only how the content of the courses has been absorbed by the trainee but, in particular, how it can be implemented with regard to working requirements. Training concepts are optimized by recording the transfer into practice: they are designed so that they relate to specific practical problems, expanded to include treatment of matters which arise not from the systematics of the syllabus but from its implementation, and tightened so that nothing is learnt except what is specifically necessary at the workplace. The intention is that the workplace, through the continuing training assessment, should directly regulate the training concepts and ensure that technical course material precisely suits the requirements.

In the *British case study* particular stress in laid on the fact that the certification of vocational training under the National Vocational Training System (NVQ) takes place largely through tests conducted directly at the workplace or in practical simulations, and, conversely, optimization of the training measures is derived from this. Thus the *Cleveland Ambulance NHS Trust* provided continuing training for its ambulance personnel as paramedics in order to improve the speed and quality of the first aid provided to the patients. The final two modules of the continuing training course are taught on-the-job, certified by observation of the participants, and immediately evaluated for retroactive quality assurance of continuing training.

Elefsis Shipyards S.A., a Greek shipbuilding company, bases quality assurance in the continuing training of its production workers directly on "systematic observations at the workplace, using a suitable, structured observation grid". Methods and contents of continuing training are modified in the light of the recorded results of the practical transfer.

Telefonica in *Spain* tries to evaluate the practical transfer as part of its "overall result evaluation", in which the effects of continuing training on attitudes, skills and practical changes in work performance are studied. Questionnaires for former participants and supervisors are used. Direct observation by management is the essential procedure [E5].

Renault Portugal attaches particular importance to workplace observation by supervisors in order to evaluate the effects of continuing training. This is supplemented by occasional effect studies carried out by external specialists [P1].

For SMEs too, the practical application of what has been learnt is naturally of central interest in evaluating the continuing training. *CELIT-France* tries to assess these effects two to three months after the completion of the training measure, the evaluation methods still being in need of further development [F2].

In some case studies, in particular stress is laid on the fact that the firm in question has been certified under ISO EN 9000 standard series: the formalized quality management and quality assurance in the firm as a whole is also linked to an ongoing evaluation of the qualifications and training of the workforce with regard to the requirements of their jobs. This provides, in particular, indications of quality problems with transferring the results of in-house continuing training into practice [for further details, cf. Chapter E].

Some of the in-house quality assurance concepts presented assume that an evaluation of continuing training from the standpoint of practical transfer alone does not conform to the functions which modern concepts of industrial work organization assign to in-house training activities.

These concepts are no longer concerned with nurturing the image of the employee as being technically competent to meet certain specific requirements of his job, favouring an image whereby the employee masters varying tasks, works and learns independently, and not only complies with instructions which have been laid down but also participates in planning his work and monitoring its results.

However obvious it may seem to evaluate in-house continuing training primarily with regard to the practical transfer of the knowledge gained, this standpoint can greatly shorten the assessment. The basis for evaluating the quality of continuing training is individual productivity in particular working activities - but suppose these activities change, so that knowledge has to be transferred independently to meet other requirements? The quality of in-house continuing training is demonstrated not only by the ability to meet current technical requirements but also by its flexibility. This, however, is difficult to observe in specific practical application. Over and above technical qualification, in-house continuing training is also expected to impart *competencies*: certain social and methodological prequalifications are to be encouraged, naturally alongside continuing vocational training. It is specifically a form of in-house continuing training which does not exclude the social and organizational context of working activities from the training process that seems suitable, to many people, to impart such transverse qualifications. Yet an evaluation which reviews only the practical application of technical knowledge fails to meet this objective. This form of evaluation is confined to assessing specific learning and working performance.

Elefsis Shipyards S.A., Greece, mentions, in addition to technical qualification objectives, even at the level of "lower and middle ranked technical personnel" a number of transverse qualifications which in-house continuing training is intended to promote: "adaptability to modified processes and forms of work", "reinforcement of the personal interest in and satisfaction by the work", etc. [GR2].

At *ATEA N.V.*, Belgium, it is assumed that continuing training and personal development must promote "autodidactic skills" among the workforce and not have an exclusively technical purpose, so that a highly complex and flexible production process is able to function: encouraging management and readiness to obtain qualifications independently [BF1].

In all the *Irish* cases, reference is made to demand for transverse qualifications: e.g.: "Management require staff to take on board more responsibility, i.e. adjust the production machinery as required" [IRL1], "Improvement and importance of teamwork" [IRL2], "Raising workers' sense of their role and responsibility in an enterprise" [IRL3].

The decentralization of spectral analysis is imposing various requirements on workers at *ARBED Luxembourg*, including versatility, flexibility and willingness to take responsibility [L1]. *Du Pont de Nemours*, again in Luxembourg, is basing its complete innovation strategy on the independent responsibility and initiative of its employees, including - and specifically - in connection with optimization and innovation processes [L4].

Coopers and Lybrand in *Portugal* want their continuing training activities to strengthen, in particular, the potential of their employees to adapt. They evaluate this by measuring changes in performance in various fields of the firm's activities (work, product, firm as a whole) [P5].

1.6 Quality assurance by monitoring of training

Because of the economic situation and organizational changes, the training departments in many firms are being required to justify their existence in a way which did not previously happen. To the extent which their performance becomes integrated in the firms' economic planning, they are losing their special role. They are no longer carried as "unproductive departments" but have to demonstrate a cost-benefit ratio in business management categories. The comprehensive term covering such economic quality assurance methods is justified "training controlling".

The classification of in-house training departments as "cost centres", which "sell" their services to other

departments in the firm concerned, makes them comparable under various headings, including economic ones, with external providers. One possible consequence of the results of training controlling is the outsourcing of training services to external suppliers, while another is that training departments which previously provided only internal services may enter the marketplace as providers of training to third parties.

Not all the cases concerned with in-house continuing training report on processes which have been developed for training controlling.

The studies on the *Spanish companies Dragados y Construcciones* and *Telefonica* represent an exception. Here, training controlling in the strict economic sense is an integral part of quality assurance in continuing training [E4, E5]. The *Spanish* study on *G.INI-TENEQ* documents an attempt to carry out quality assurance in continuing training entirely with reference to quantitative (cost) parameters. Training controlling is carried out radically in this case [E3].

It can however be assumed that all firms which maintain in-house training departments use at least *informal* methods of training controlling - even if only in the budgeting of these departments and the assessment of their value by the decision makers. Where the cases include instructions for training controlling in the strict sense, these are rarely complied with: there are few reports of cost/benefit evaluation methods. It can be asserted, however, that all the enterprises described in the case studies are concerned, to a greater or lesser extent, with the question of whether their in-house continuing training pays its way.

The *Irish case study* reports that training controlling represents a prerequisite for adequate investment in continuing training: "The need to evaluate the results of training and the bottom line costs of providing training are creating a pressure to make training more accountable. Without simple cost effective instruments many trainers resist the challenge to measure the results of their efforts. The spend on training in companies needs to be increased to maintain competitiveness, but many companies resist spending in this area because they are unsure of the return on their investment. Good evaluation tools will help trainers develop programmes that yield the results required, determine the costs of training and development, calculate the return on investment, and get more management support for training and development" [IRL].

A fundamental problem of training controlling, and one which has also been documented in many cases outside the present case studies, is that the cost of training measures can be ascertained relatively simply,[1] but not all the benefit can be demonstrated under economic headings. In this situation, training controlling methods resort to the introduction of *"benefit indicators"*, which for their part are not as inaccessible to business management evaluation as the qualifications of the workforce (cf. E4), but are determined or at least affected by qualification processes. However zealously such indicators are used, as a consequence of the practical need for calculability, the fact remains that it cannot be assumed that improvements in the quality of continuing training are reliably expressed in these indicators. In many of the cases, therefore, in the efforts to improve quality, the cost-effectiveness of continuing training is regarded more as a maxim than as a precisely quantifiable yardstick.

1.7 Quality assurance in innovative in-house forms of learning

Although the traditional course of continuing training still plays the central role in most cases, there are also reports of many new forms of in-house continuing training designed to integrate the obtaining of qualifications more closely into the working process: they include on-the-job learning [F2, L1, L4, P1, UK: all], works visits [UK1], project team learning [IRL1, IR3], presentations by external experts [IRL1, UK1], and the obtaining of qualifications by supervision by colleagues

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[1] This at least applies to the direct costs of in-house continuing training. In the cost calculation, areas of uncertainty necessarily arise when, over and above the direct costs, an attempt is also made to determine the indirect costs (such as the costs of making personnel available) and the opportunity costs.

[UK4] or by coaching [BF1], and forms of on-the-job self-qualification with open learning and CBT materials [BF1, IR2, IR3, UK4]. The role of the training department changes accordingly: "It changes from trainer to facilitator (broker) in the field of transfer of knowledge/experience/information" [BF1].

This variety of locations and forms for internal learning has repercussions on quality assurance in in-house continuing training. Its basis can no longer be confined to the conventional evaluation of instruction. To the extent that in-house training and the working process are linked by new forms of learning, it is necessary to go beyond the actual teaching processes to analyse specific properties of the surrounding organization, if statements are to be made regarding possible improvements in continuing training. The quality of in-house continuing training depends on the "corporate culture", the openness of the environment and, in brief, on the realization of a "learning organization".

From this angle, the evaluation of in-house continuing training has the function of arresting structural and organizationally caused obstacles to learning and providing advice on the removal of such obstacles. It thus plays its part in the realization of new concepts of corporate organization. It is clear that such didactic intervention in the operational organization presupposes intensive cooperation, and perhaps even the integration of production and training departments within the firms. The separation hitherto customary proves obstructive if the evaluation of continuing training is to have horizons beyond actual qualification: questions of work organization, the technical design of workplaces, performance measurement and remuneration certainly have a part to play in the effectiveness of in-house continuing training. Although these factors can probably only be changed to a limited extent from the standpoint of optimizing continuing training, it is nevertheless regarded as

indispensable in some case studies that their specific effects should be made visible - if only to adapt qualification in the individual case to the conditions of an environment which is determined by economics rather than didactics.

On working through the case enterprise studies, however, it is notable that, as a whole, little attention is paid to this possibility that quality assurance in in-house training will have a retroactive effect on the organization of the enterprise - at least, there are few reports to that effect. In virtually all cases, the individual training measure and the preparatory and follow-up activities are regarded as the only changing variables of quality management.

The case studies present several examples in which the conventional separation of continuing training and production is partly eliminated, for example by the use of in-house technical experts and practitioners as lecturers, by autodidactic materials for production employees, the transfer of learning locations into the working process, or organizational integration.

At ATEA N.V., a producer of telecommunications products in (Flemish) Belgium, technical production experts are used as lecturers in in-house continuing training. Teaching staff act as moderators, providing didactic aids. As a result, the topicality and applicability of the information imparted is more reliable than when professional lecturers are used - the latter may be more familiar with the contents/methods of instruction, but their remoteness from practice often means they have problems in adjusting to technological change and the complexity of the requirements in the working process. The continuous improvement of the courses is ensured on the basis of evaluation documents prepared by the technical experts: they contribute their work experience to the process of quality assurance in continuing training [BF1].

Cf. also *ARBED, Luxembourg*: "The need for training identified at department level was put into specific terms by a technician from the "spectral analyses" department (the "officer") who, in consultation with the Training Centre, prepared the specification and finalized the design of the training programme, the preparation of the content and the organization of the practical part of the training... Transfer to the workplace is guaranteed by the very concept of the case analysed, because training comprises a theoretical section of 40 hours and a practical section of 98 hours. In addition, retention of a nucleus of personnel from the old spectrometry centre enables the training as such to be extended in the form of a kind of sponsorship or ongoing monitoring" [L1].

Thus, in a number of cases, the suitability of continuing training to meet demand and its availability at short notice are ensured by the use of *non-personal learning media*, for example open learning materials, computer-based training, home study materials. In this case, in particular, quality assurance methods have to intervene in the development of the learning materials; the actual learning process is largely outside their sphere of influence.

> ATEA N.V., Belgium, relies on permanent continuing training, but has problems with providing training to relatively large groups of participants at the same time. Each employee is supposed to be able to match "his" learning material to "his" time. The course form therefore often seems unsuitable. Instead, open learning materials are offered for independent study, with the availability of an experienced coach ("non-classical courses"). The quality of the continuing training is thus less dependent on the didactic skill of a lecturer than on the structure of the learning materials. It can thus be provided more uniformly and reliably than in conventional courses. "The quality of a non-classical course is mainly influenced by the contents of the course (not by the didactic qualities of the expert). Guidelines for developing non-classical courses have more result than guidelines for the development of classical courses" [BF1].

Concepts intended to strengthen the *link between work and learning* are used in many case studies - but there is little mention of general methods for evaluating them or instruments for quality assurance in job-related continuing training. Isolated attempts to form a specific assessment of directly job-related in-house training are closely linked to special conditions in the firms presented; there is virtually no description of general experience or even universal instruments of evaluation.

The justification given for the use of job-related continuing training is its effectiveness. It is said to circumvent certain barriers found in course-based continuing training: for example, it is believed to improve the practical transfer of what has been learnt or to impart social and methodological skills more effectively. Also, it takes place not in an educational environment but in the working world - so it has to prove its value directly in competition with economic objectives. While

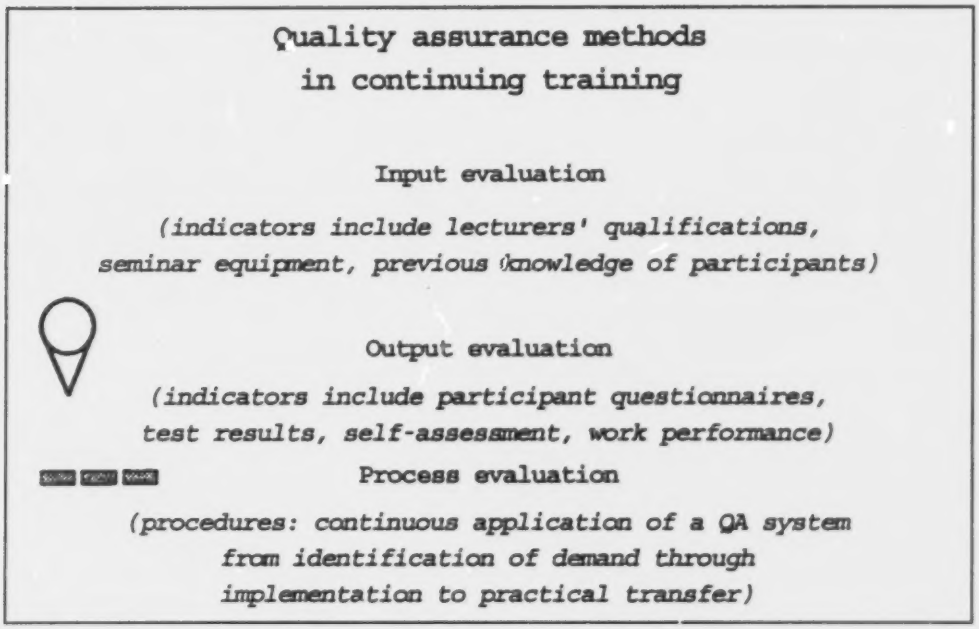
there are still virtually no cases in which quality assurance and evaluation of job-related training are systematically applied, this is not only attributable to the fact that the reintroduction of continuing training into industrial workplaces in Europe began only a few years ago and is still largely at the experimental and project stage. In additional, there are difficulties to be mastered which do not arise in the same form with the quality assurance of course-based continuing training. Such training is organizationally independent and has definable starting and finishing times - natural measuring points, as it were, to provide a starting point for methods of input and output evaluation. By contrast, measures of on-the-job continuing training are difficult to define in terms of time and organization - learning and the application of what has been learnt are combined into a simultaneous and continuous process.

1.8 Methods of quality assurance in in-house continuing training

Depending on the forms of learning employed and the objectives of quality assurance, the case studies mention numerous methods of training evaluation which will be considered as such in this section.

Methods of quality assurance and quality management are more than a mere monitoring of the quality of continuing training; but they are based on methods of evaluating continuing training and monitoring its quality. In the documented practical in-house cases, these methods are often not presented in a strictly separate and formalized manner. They are often employed in alternating combinations, and frequently constitute no more than specific elements within largely informal procedures for quality assurance in in-house continuing training.

The broad spectrum of evaluation methods used in these cases will be classified in this presentation by forms of input evaluation, output evaluation and process evaluation.[2]



1.8.1 Input evaluation

Methods of *input evaluation* evaluate the material and personal initial conditions of continuing training measures in terms of the educational objectives in comparison with the participants' prerequisites, the didactic and methological approaches used, and the syllabus. They assume that the provision of appropriate preconditions guarantees the quality of training measures. In the case studies, the following forms are documented in quality assurance in in-house continuing training:

- determining and evaluating training demand

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[2] In the case studies, combinations of these ideal types regularly arise. They are not encountered in the pure form in any empirical case. The subdivision used here is adopted for reasons of analytical clarity.

- selecting lecturers with reference to criteria of technical and didactic quality

- selecting instructional methods and locations from quality aspects

- planning the material training resources (premises, hardware) and the instructional media from quality aspects

In the case of *ARBED* in *Luxembourg*, input evaluation is undertaken with reference to a number of *specifications*:

"*Specifications:* the training activities derived from an analysis of the identified needs are defined in the form of specifications which, in their most comprehensive form, have the following structure and elements:

- structural section, with a statement of grounds, training objectives and evaluation criteria

- human resources section, providing information on the participants, their seniority and, in particular, their previous training

- management section, dealing with logistic aspects

- planning section

- financial section for budgeting purposes

- teaching section, which deals with the objectives of training and the themes and their content and duration" [L1].

The same applies to the *French SOLLAC* case [F1].

The *German* study reports, by way of example, on input evaluations by the *Federal Institute for Labour* in connection with the so-called Quality Decree and makes particular reference to problems of pure input evaluation: "Since the quality standards essentially verify input quality, their prime function is to provide information and guidance to the employment exchanges. They have no monitoring or selective functions, at least in practice. In the case of individual measures taken by the employment exchanges, intensifying the monitoring process has resulted in the discovery of a number of measures suffering from significant quality defects."

1.8.2 Output evaluation

The types of evaluation method encountered most frequently in the case studies are those initiated *after*

completion of a training measure. Many of these methods draw conclusions about the quality of the training measure from its success or from the satisfaction of individual participants; all of them relate to individual training measures. Instruments used here are:[3]

- Documented self-assessment by the participants at the end of the training measure [E4, E5, UK3]

- Final discussions between participants and lecturer [UK2, UK4]

- Participant questionnaires [BF1, E3, E4, F2, F3, IR1, GR2, GR3[4], P1, P5, UK3, UK4]

- Questionnaires to lecturers [GR3]

- Test results as indicators of the quality of the training measure [P1, UK2, UK3]

- Assessment by participants' supervisors following their return to work [BF1, E4, E5, F1, F2, F3, P1, P5, UK3]

- Systematic observation of participants at their work-places [E5, GR2]

- Monitoring of productivity data after completion of the training measures [E5, IRL1, L4]

Such simple, and therefore widespread, quality evaluation

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[3] The cases are presented not on a formalized basis but as informal descriptions which describe the evaluation instruments with varying degrees of detail. It can therefore be assumed that some instruments are also applied in cases where there is no specific report of them. The case references given here relate to explicit mentions.

[4] In the case of [GR3], participants and lecturers are questioned at the same time, and the results are compared in the evaluation process.

methods are based on the results of continuing training measures. In many cases, it becomes apparent that such *output evaluations* are often of only limited significance: the actual process of continuing training is outside the scope of the evaluation. Even in the case of material products, a quality evaluation oriented purely toward results suffers from a degree of randomness and unreliability. The inspection naturally takes place after the event, and hence cannot contribute to improving the result which is inspected: it therefore provides only limited support for quality assurance. In continuing training, as a complex service, result-oriented evaluations as such seem to be of only limited applicability: the result of continuing training measures depends on many other factors as well as the quality of the continuing training measure, such as the initial status of the participants or special requirements in terms of transferring what has been learnt into vocational practice. In addition, the evaluation of results presupposes a defined interface between the continuing training and application phases. Although this can still be determined in the case of continuing training measures based purely on courses, this is no longer the case with the job-related and continuous forms of continuing training described in many of the cases. In some of these cases, therefore, output evaluation is regarded as a medium to *supplement* other methods, and not as the sole basis of quality assurance in in-house continuing training.

Examples of special methods of output evaluation from the case studies are:

A combination of evaluation of the quality of training measures by the participants' supervisors and the participants themselves is found at *ATEA N.V., Belgium*: "Participants in training courses evaluate the course after completion. This happens with an evaluation-sheet which requests a single score for the training. A description of one weak and one strong point of the training is also requested. The sheet has to be signed by the hierarchy of the participant. This ensures that the participant and hierarchy have a moment of conversation about the training" [BF1].

The *National Bank of Greece S.A.* also involves participants and supervisors in the training evaluation. Two surveys are carried out, one addressed to the participants after the end of the course, and another six months later addressed to both the participants and their supervisors [GR3].

SMEs adopt a less systematic approach to evaluation projects. Nevertheless, the two *French* cases demonstrate that, here again, an attempt is made to evaluate the effects of the continuing training: "The subject of evaluation of the training is a matter of current concern. But the enterprise admits that it is not very good at this function. Although it can rely on a few global productivity indicators, it is not efficient at identifying the qualitative effects of training. The main form of evaluation comprises meetings organized 2 or 3 months after the training, where an attempt is made to analyse the technical contributions" [F2]. As regards the enterprise *Raymond Geoffray*, the following is reported: "Among the practical methods of evaluation, one takes the form of a satisfaction survey of the trainees. In addition to the evaluation in the strict sense, the enterprise conducts non-systematic monitoring of training. Thus the Managing Director frequently asks his employees what they have learnt or are in the process of learning. The object is not to check up on them, but to take a personal interest in the content (what new technologies have been learnt, can anyone solve a problem which interests him, etc.)" [F3].

1.8.3 Process-oriented approaches to evaluation

Process-oriented evaluation is not an independent effort like the evaluation of the input and output of continuing training. It requires both of these, but relates their results to each other on an ongoing basis and so makes them capable of evaluation. To what extent ensuring certain preconditions for an in-house training measure has contributed to its quality can only be determined by reference to the results of a subsequent output evaluation. Conversely, which successes are attributable to a preceding training measure, and how, cannot be elucidated from a straightforward output evaluation. An analysis of the initial circumstances of the training measure is also

necessary. Virtually all cases therefore report on methods which combine input and output evaluation. As the Irish study summarizes it: "The key function of the accurate identification of training needs which specifies in output terms what behavioral changes are required and how it will be measured at the outset is the key to good training intervention and evaluation" [IRL].

Process-oriented approaches are applied by combining individual quality evaluation methods to form a *system* of continuous quality assurance which is designed to evaluate and optimize the entire in-house training scene, not just individual measures. These approaches are thus more methodical and abstract than those designed for direct quality control of training measures. They are instructions for in-house *quality management*.

In many cases, *additional measuring points* are provided. Not only are data for an evaluation acquired at the start and finish of a course, but the methods and organizational precautions of the in-house training system are recorded and evaluated in the course of phase models of the continuing training procedure, with a view to ascertaining the quality of the continuing training. Process-oriented approaches are thus not solely confined to the evaluation of seminars and courses; they encompass the whole continuing training process, starting from the determination of demand and advice on continuing training, and ultimately ensuring that what has been learnt is transferred into practice. They evaluate not the final result or the starting conditions of a training measure, but the actual process of implementation.

The *Spanish* building company *Dragados y Construcciones* applies an integrated system of input, process and output evaluation:

"*1.1 'A priori' evaluation:* this is carried out by experts in accordance with their knowledge of the programmes and of the context in which it is to be developed. It is undertaken in accordance with two criteria: instructional consistency and feasibility.

- Instructional consistency: In the programme proposal, details have to be given of purposes, objectives, content, rules governing evaluation and means, methodology, specific techniques, equipment resources, time management, recommendations and addressees.

- Feasibility: Resources and limitations relating to institutions, instructor training, time management, availability and equipment management.

1.2 Evaluation of the application process: This covers all the activities carried out throughout the implementation of the programme. It includes:

- Permanent monitoring of implementation;

- Identification of obstacles together with the validity of the solutions applied;

- Integration of processes, instruments, activities, etc.

1.3 'A posteriori' evaluation: this is based on observing, measuring and analysing the effects of application. These are measured on the basis of information provided by the participants, teachers and beneficiaries of the training" [E4].

In so far as the in-house continuing training is integrated into general internal strategies [cf. Section 1.1], such process-oriented approaches are becoming increasingly important. It must be stated, however, that the implementation of such continuous global concepts of quality assurance within the firms is not yet consistently ensured in many case studies, even if continuous training is understood there are a strategic parameter and an investment. In the majority of the case studies, reports still deal primarily with ad hoc evaluation methods. In some case studies, process-oriented approaches to evaluation are carried out in the context of multi-enterprise standards. In addition to certain national quality programmes for continuing vocational training, the "quality standard", ISO EN 9000 et seq., plays a part in the majority of these cases [cf. Chapter E].

It can be seen as an important advantage of process-oriented evaluation methods of quality assurance in continuous training that they provide not only standards but also aids to quality improvement. This means that improved economy and quality in continuing training can be actually brought about, not just monitored.

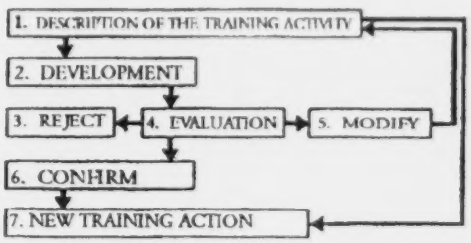
A particularly comprehensive case that can be mentioned here is *Telefonica, Spain*, which systematically combines five types of evaluation:

"Types of evaluation: Five types of evaluation are provided for, to develop this idea.

- Preventive - evaluates
- Additive - controls
- Formative evaluation - analysis
- Longitudinal - verifies
- Impact - detects"

Particularly interesting for quality assurance is formative evaluation, which aims at permanent optimization of the continuing training processes:

"*Formative evaluation:* This is undertaken by analysing the return information on the quality of the actual action. Its objective is to determine, via this analysis, the degree to which objectives have been achieved and to correct possible shortcomings in the planning and development of the actual training action, with a view to ensuring the future training actions are of higher quality than those under evaluation. The chart which follows shows how the evaluation fits into the training process."



[E5]

2. Quality assurance in cooperation between firms and external training providers

In virtually all documented cases from the Member States, cooperation between firms and training providers becomes, in one way or another, the subject of quality assurance measures in continuing vocational training.

Two fundamentally different forms of this kind of cooperation can be identified, implying quality assurance strategies and procedures which themselves differ accordingly.

- On the one hand, there are those cases in which large enterprises - as described in Chapter 1 - systematically plan, design, implement and evaluate their personnel advancement and continuing training procedures as an integral part of corporate strategy.

  In these cases, external training providers are called upon only for particular measures in the *implementation of continuing training*. The form of the cooperation is determined unilaterally by the specific requirements of the large concerns. The training provider has to submit to these requirements, and the enterprise's quality assurance control mechanisms, which are linked to those requirements.

  Such forms of cooperation, in which training providers function as mere "suppliers" of continuing training, are to be found in the following cases.[5]

#	Name	Country	Sector	Work force
BF1	ATEA N.V.	Belgium (Fl.)	Electronics, communications	1,500

[5] A number of case descriptions of training providers are also relevant, but training providers are also included in the category of cooperation with SMEs, and so are listed there.

BF6	Ministry for the Flemish community	Belgium (Fl.)		
E4	Dragados y Construcciones	Spain	Building	12,000
E5	Telefonica Spanien	Spain	Communications	73,000
F1	SOLLAC	France	Steel	20,000
F4	Renault France	France	Car manufacture	
GR2	Elefis Shipyards	Greece	Shipbuilding	2,000
GR3	National Bank of Greece	Greece	Banking	14,000
L1	ARBED	Luxembourg	Steel	8,000
L4	Du Pont de Nemours	Luxembourg	Chemical	1,270
P1	Renault Portugal	Portugal	Car manufacture	2,300
UK3	Walker Financial Solutions Ltd	United Kingdom	DP systems house	80

- On the other hand, the studies from the Member States also include cases in which the cooperative arrangement between firms and providers goes far beyond the mere delegation of the practicalities of continuing training. In particular, small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) need specific assistance from the external providers even at the stage of planning procedures, and subsequently in the form of an *on-going advisory service during the entire process* of in-house personnel advancement, through to the evaluation of the success rate and efficiency of the continuing training.

  In these cases, cooperation takes on a totally new and innovative quality which itself becomes, or has to become, the subject of quality assurance in continuing training [Joël Bonamy in the French study].

  Such innovative forms of cooperation are picked out as central themes - broken down by firms and providers - in the following cases:

#	Name	Country	Sector	Work force
F2	CELIT France	France	Industrial filters	50
F3	Raymond Geoffray	France	Preserves	36
IRL: all	[Unidentified SMEs]	Ireland	[various]	32-370
P5	Coopers and Lybrand	Portugal	Business consultants	278
UK1	Bowles Outdoor Centre	United Kingdom	Outdoor education	16
UK2	Cleveland Ambulance	United Kingdom	Ambulance service	296
UK3	Walker Financial Solutions	United Kingdom	DP systems house	80
#	*Name of training provider*	*Country*	*Type of provider*	
BF4	VDAB	Belgium (Fl.)	Government Institute	
BF5	VIZO	Belgium (Fl.)	AG Institute	
D2	Weiterbildung Hamburg e.V.	Germany	Regional association providers	
E2	G.INI-TENEO	Spain	Association of Public Enterprises	
E3	INEM	Spain	Government Institute	
F5	CESI - Normandie	France	Private training provider	
F6	GRETA - Est Essonne	France	Government Institute	
GR1	OAED	Greece	Government Institute	
GR4	IVEPE	Greece	Industrial employers' providers	
GR5	INE/GSEE	Greece	Trade Union providers	
L2	Prolingua	Luxembourg	Private provider for languages	
L3	CFPC	Luxembourg	Government Institute	
P2	IFP - Vocational training institute for banks	Portugal	Banks Training Institute	
P3	FUNDETEC	Portugal	Provider: electrical/ electronics industry	
P4	PORTUCEL	Portugal	Provider: paper/cellulose industry	
P6	IEFP	Portugal	Government institute	
UK4	North Trafford College	United Kingdom	Private provider for firms	

2.1 Cooperation between large enterprises and training providers

As illustrated in Chapter 1, quality assurance measures in in-house continuing training are generally the expression of a changed attitude towards the continuing training of employees. Continuing training is perceived as an investment, which - like investments in buildings and machinery - pursues strategic objectives, and whose costs are regarded as expenditure which is necessary for the firm's success.

To the extent that continuing training is no longer regarded as a social benefit provided by firms, the continuing training departments in those firms must, of course, also submit to success and efficiency criteria in the same way as all other departments. Thus, alongside the increased demand for continuing training, it is also the cost/efficiency argument which prompts many firms to buy in external training services instead of developing their own capacities for continuing training.

Many firms even adopt the policy of thinning out their own continuing training departments so as to make their continuing training activities more flexible and cost-effective by using external providers.

The case of *Renault France* shows that even large enterprises are increasingly resorting to services provided by external training providers. They do this to improve the economy of their continuing training:

"The case study relates to a move by a large enterprise towards restructuring its training system. The rapid increase in training needs prompted the enterprise to increase the volume of training activities subcontracted to external bodies, while decentralizing the purchase decision. Subjecting the training purchase process to quality assurance made it possible to control the risks of dysfunctioning of what had become a complex system of functioning. ... In order to improve production at a lower cost, Renault implemented a total quality approach which assumes better organization of its own work and the work done by its suppliers and its network, but also assumes greater participation by its workforce. ... The objectives aimed at by this approach are as follows:

- promoting a language and tools which are common to all the decentralized purchasers, so as to guarantee overall consistency of the purchasing style without the need to centralize it;

- embarking, together with the providing bodies, on a review of the structure of the retail costs of training activities, with a view to improving the cost/efficiency ratio of the services provided;

- endeavouring to eliminate waste, by a joint effort by the principal and the supplier, and so improve the productivity of the training production process" [F4].

Elefsis Shipyards S.A., Greece, operates its comprehensive scheme of continuing training largely through "a training department and an in company training centre". Where external training providers are also brought in, they are directly compared with the training services provided in-house, and are controlled in the light of the results of surveys of the quality and efficiency of continuing training at Elefsis Shipyards S.A. [GR2].

In a word: the trend towards economizing in continuing training, which is linked to quality assurance in continuing training, results in greater efforts being made to externalize the implementation of that training.

This does not mean, however, that the external training providers can obtain a better price for their standard programmes. The reverse is true. In a similar manner to the companies supplying the mechanical engineering or car industries, training providers have to adapt completely to their customers' requirements. In their efforts to improve quality and introduce the appropriate quality assurance methods into continuing training [cf. Chapter 1], the firms subject the external training providers to the same yardsticks as the in-house

continuing training departments. The evidence of quality required by the firms, and the corresponding controls, cover not only the product (the continuing training) but also the process of implementation and the provider's actual organization - to the point of demanding certification under national or international standards.

"Tailor-made continuing training" is really being demanded for the first time, by firms which use their competence in continuing training matters to ascertain precise requirements, have specific ideas about the organization and methods of the continuing training, and ultimately impose binding yardsticks for success. In these forms of cooperation the training provider is quite clearly the dependent partner and has to adapt his activities to the client firm.

However, the cases show a number of different specific forms which this type of cooperation can take as regards the active efforts by the training providers to adjust to their clients.

2.1.1 Training providers become straightforward providers of services to firms

In virtually all the cases described which relate to large enterprises, endeavouring to improve their quality or introduce quality assurance into continuing training, external training providers are no more than assistants involved in implementing individual, precisely defined components of the in-house continuing training programme.

In such cases they are no longer the focus of the continuing training process and its quality assurance, but become the precisely defined means for this process. It is only by becoming completely subject to the quality assurance methods laid down by the firms that they can

carry out what is required of them by the firms.

This form of unilateral cooperation between training provider and firm is described in particular detail in the *French* case of the buying-in of training by *Renault*:

"The case study relates to a move by a large enterprise towards restructuring its training system. The rapid increase in training needs prompted the enterprise to increase the volume of training activities subcontracted to external bodies, while decentralizing the purchase decision. Subjecting the training purchase process to quality assurance made it possible to control the risks of dysfunctioning of what had become a complex system of functioning. The case of Renault has been included as representative of a large enterprise which, having restructured its training system on the basis of decentralized units making substantial use of external training services, decides to subject its training purchasing process to quality assurance" [F4].

As part of its efforts at modernization, Renault decentralized responsibility for continuing training to the various branches. As an aid to those responsible for the decentralized procedure and as a means for guaranteeing a degree of consistency of the level of continuing training in the enterprise as a whole, the procedures for buying in the continuing training were codified jointly.

"The purchasing procedure comprises 6 stages:

1. The decision whether to undertake or buy in training, expressed by the phrase: "Make or buy?". A decision-making aid enables this decision to be automated.

2. The systematization of the specification. This formalizes in precise terms the problem which the training is intended to solve, the type of response expected and the arrangements for its implementation.

3. The definition of rules for inviting a tender, and especially situations in which the invitation to tender will be used.

4. The arrangements for implementing the invitation to tender: especially launching of the operation and evaluating the bids.

5. The formalization of a teaching contract, designed as the operational implementation of the specification. It lays down the specific arrangements for performing the service, and those for monitoring and evaluating the training.

6. The setting-up of a training agreement. In particular, this defines the legal and financial conditions on which the service will be provided."

The objectives pursued by Renault with this standardized buying-in of external continuing training are primarily connected with improving the economy and efficiency of the continuing training. Requiring, and where appropriate enforcing, increased cost-consciousness on the part of the training provider and improving productivity in the continuing training measures are characteristic of these attempts to introduce quality assurance into continuing training [F4].

In the context of the systematic efforts by the large enterprise to rationalize all phases of its own continu-

ing staff training activities and subject them to appropriate quality assurance mechanisms, the external training provider initially appears as a foreign body, subjected to precise quality and cost requirements.

In isolated cases, these types of relationship between training provider and firm also occur in formally organized SMEs:

Walker Financial Solutions Ltd., United Kingdom, 80 employees "develops computer software for financial applications". The role of continuing training is an important one, because in this sector "skills are in short supply, and technology is rapidly changing". It was decided that precise objectives and standards should be defined before any training activity in the firm. As well as internal multipliers, the firm also cooperates with external providers. Determination of objectives, the planning of training and the subsequent evaluation all remain, however, in the hands of Walker Financial Solutions Ltd. "Training suppliers are chosen via a supplier selection procedure, which determines their ability to meet defined objectives for training. After the training empolyees are asked to complete a questionnaire evaluating the training provided. The performance of the provider is also assessed through the debriefing process after the training activity, which determines how successful the training was in meeting precourse objectives and business benefit" [UK3].

This also applies, naturally, to criteria, methods and organization for evaluating the continuing training:

The arrangements in the specification for external providers at *Renault* in *France* include: "Defining criteria for evaluating the training, to be applied to any activity: evaluating the individual benefits at the conclusion of the training, assessing the training service via the quality of the service provided, and use of the benefits gained in a vocational situation" [F4].

Quality assurance in this type of cooperative relationship between a large enterprise and an external training provider is largely attributable to the firm's initiative. Instruction and supervision by the firm determine the relationship. The training provider is compelled, simply by the codified requirements in the specification, to undertake certain quality assurance measures if he does not wish to lose the client.

This procedure adopted by large enterprises, involving the externalization of large areas of continuing training by the buy-in of training providers but also making the external providers comply with extensive specifications,

has effects on the development of the continuing training market [cf. Chapter 3].

The quality of the cooperation thus generated between firm and provider is quite unilaterally defined by the firm. This contains an *innovative element* for the reorganization of many traditional training providers who, hitherto, still often regarded continuing training in a supply-oriented, missionary light with little orientation towards applications. In addition, this subsumptive compulsion has brought home to many providers, for the first time, the idea of quality assurance, of making their activities more effective and of cost-consciousness.

On the other hand, this kind of regulated cooperation can generate important innovative impulses, which the training provider could introduce into the firm's continuing training programme. The danger exists that the formal requirements in the specifications are perceived by the training provider as an external compulsion, so that only formal lip service is made to them. The motivation to the independent development of the quality of continuing training is lacking when the provider is subjected to the imposition of outside requirements [cf. Chapter 4]. This would be particularly regrettable as regards the innovative competence that training providers need to show when working together with SMEs.

2.1.2 Training providers endeavour to anticipate firms' requirements: the sectoral approach to quality assurance in continuing training

In a number of the cases from the Member States, training providers are introduced whose continuing training activities relate to firms in a specific industry.

#	*Name of training provider*	*Country*	*Type*
E1	AEEDE	Spain	Spanish Association of Universities for Management
BF4	EHSAL	Belgium (Fl.)	Management school
P2	IFB	Portugal	Bank's training institute
P3	FUNDETEC	Portugal	Private provider working for the electrical and electronics industry
P4	PORTUCEL	Portugal	Training provider created by a group of firms (paper and cellulose industry)
BF5	VIZO	Belgium (Fl.)	AG Institute; training provider specializing in SMEs

Some of these providers are institutions set up by a particular industry association [P2, P3, E1], some result from a community of purpose among various firms [P3], and some are private training enterprises which have selected a particular focus for the content of their activities [P2].

What these training providers share is a two-stage procedure for adapting to their customer's training needs:

- In a first stage, they take an active part in endeavouring to determine the present and future continuing training needs of the firms in their sector or their customer group. At the same time, they also try to anticipate this group's quality concepts and adjust their own quality assurance to suit those ideas, or endeavour to obtain the appropriate certification under relevant standards.

  These "sectoral" training and quality requirements are determined by systematic and regularly repeated management surveys addressed to the firms within the industry. The results are analysed and synthesized by expert committees.

An example of this procedure is offered by the *Banks' Vocational Training Institute* [IFB] in *Portugal*:

"Its features make the Banks' Training Institute the main institution providing vocational training services in the banking sector. The Institute's annual training plan is therefore drawn up so as to meet the vocational training needs of banking institutions in general and those associated with the Portuguese Banking Association [APB] in particular. ... To ensure a correct match, needs are analysed at regular meetings of the IFB's Instructional Counsel, attended by representatives of the human resources divisions of the associated banks. Apart from this formal link with its "potential clients", the IFB maintains very close and regular contacts with all the banks, which naturally supplements the regular diagnosis by the Instructional Counsel. The annual training plan is drawn up on the basis of the needs identified. These derive from organizational, technological or other changes involving a modification of the functional content of the jobs and needs anticipated by the IFB on the basis of foreseeable trends in the sector" [P2].

PORTUCEL, another *Portuguese training provider*, generated by a group of firms in the paper and cellulose industry, determines the demand for training by circulating questionnaires in the firms and through the industry association [P4].

FUNDETEC, a private training provider in *Portugal* aims at the medium-term anticipation of needs in the electrical and electronics industries through an advisory counsel of associated firms, direct customer contacts and also university contacts [P3].

North Trafford College, a private *British* training provider, carries out job-related continuing training in industry. The training measures are closely linked to the client's working processes, enabling the provider to gain knowledge and skills to determine future training demands [UK4].

- This sector-based forecasting is given more specific form in a second stage by direct customer contacts with the specific firms.

In the case of FUNDETEC, for example: "The client enterprise informs FUNDETEC of the features of the group. Nevertheless, at the start of the training process, a diagnosis is undertaken in order to adapt the training to the needs of the trainees" [P3].

In this way, training providers - especially those specializing in a particular sector - try to anticipate customer requirements among the firms and to reflect them in their own processes and structures. The improved quality, and quality assurance, of their continuing training activities thus become the guiding principle of their work. Customer requirements become the basis of their quality assurance efforts, often taking personalized form as an advisory committee made up by companies

in the industry.

On the basis of these initial conditions, training providers define internal procedures for ensuring and achieving quality. These relate to:

- suitable continuing training concepts

- suitable continuing training contents

- suitable continuing training methods

- suitable continuing training personnel

- suitable evaluation methods.

Appropriate methods of evaluation and control are developed and implemented. In particular, methods are installed for ensuring internal and external feedback between all those involved (instructors, trainees, supervisors, workplace colleagues) and the systematic auditing processes within the provider's organization.

The auditing process at FUNDUTEC can serve as an example:

"Throughout the process, a specialist team undertakes an instruction audit. On the basis of a reference framework of explicit criteria, the team systematically acquires data on the training system, its results and its effects, in order to identify problems and take appropriate decisions for solving them. This audit relates more specifically to the quality of the instructional services, which includes evaluation but is not confined to it.

One of the instruments used to evaluate the training is the questionnaire. The questionnaire makes it possible to evaluate the organization of the training activity as regards environment, computer equipment, teaching equipment, etc. It also evaluates the extent to which the objects of the programme are achieved, the length of the module, documentation, content, etc.

The trainees also evaluate the instructors' performance and their technical and teaching skills. Thus, they analyse the methods used, the instructor's ability to motivate and his relationship with the trainees. The questionnaires are summarized and subjected to statistical analysis, and the result is notified to those involved in the process: instructors, planner of the training, client enterprise, etc. In addition to the analysis of the questionnaires, statistical studies are carried out on the basis of indicators which make it possible to monitor absenteeism and the results of the learning period.

As well as the collection and processing of the questionnaires (database processing), a special method for conducting a teaching audit has been devised. This makes it possible to analyse the training activities in qualitative terms and to take effective 'real time' measures.

During the module, these audits gather information, by means of scales, on the various protagonists in the training: the course coordinator, the module coordinator, the instructors, the trainees, the secretaries, etc.

The audit analyses whether the programmes are suitable for the target public (level, content, methods), whether the training objectives are suitable for the constantly changing vocational situation, whether the objectives are suitable for the legislation governing training, whether the teaching resources (computer hardware, software, manuals, videos, etc.) are suitable for the changing content, whether it is complete, updated, practical, motivating, etc.

The audit studies whether the instructors are technically and educationally competent, whether they are in contact with practical situations, whether they conduct research in the field in which they work, whether they have improved their teaching methods, and whether they undergo content training.

The audit also examines whether the teaching methods are revised and given great depth, whether they are tested, and whether they adjust to sociological and technological changes.

This system obliges the audit team to make daily visits to the training premises throughout the course, in order to gather the material which will enable it to provide feedback on a continuous basis rather than at the end of the process.

In addition, this team generally arranges interviews with the trainees, instructors and other participants in the training process.

At the end of each training period, an individual report is drawn up for each course. The final report, which aims to disclose the quality indicators relating to the training, is drawn up on the basis of the joint analysis of CEC reports" [P3].

As already noted, these extensive independent anticipatory efforts by certain training providers with an industry background are *no substitute* for the second stage of direct customer communication and adaptation with the various firms. This is the only way in which continuing training can be genuinely "tailored".

Unlike the type of provider described earlier, which merely reacts to firm's ideas, the sectoral provider has the opportunity for an informed dialogue with the firms. As will be seen, this is the essential requirement for working with SMEs.

The procedure adopted by the *Government institutions* documented in the case studies is more global than in the case of training providers who specialize in particular sectors. These include INEM in Spain, GRETA in France, VDAB in Belgium, OAED in Greece, The Federal Institute for Labour in Germany, FAS in Ireland and IEFP in Portugal. In their quality assurance work, these institutions endeavour to anticipate or forecast employment and training needs, both in the various sectors and on a regional basis. A scientific inventory is often used for this purpose, and considerations of social policy also play a part in the attempt to determine the training needs. Many government institutions make a particular effort to devise concepts and training services to suit SMEs.

2.2 Improving the quality of cooperation between SMEs and external training providers

It may seem amazing at first glance that the documented cases from the Member States include a significant number of SMEs which are already concerned with matters of quality assurance in continuing training.

This once again makes it clear that, as regards questions of in-house continuing training, the group of SMEs is a heterogeneous one. As well as enterprises which are very hesitant about adopting the idea of continuing training for employees, there are others which are very active in this field.

Documented cases of SMEs in our sample of quality assurance in continuing training are:

#	*Name of the SME*	#	*Name of the SME*
BF3	CKZ W.F.	P5	Coopers and Lybrand
F2	Celit France	UK1	Bowles Outdoor Centre
F3	Raymond Geoffray	UK2	Cleveland Ambulance
ILL	[all]	UK3	Walker Financial Solutions Ltd

Since SMEs *always* meet their need for continuing training by cooperating with external training providers, a great many of the documented cases of training providers are also relevant in connection with the question of quality assurance in cooperation between SMEs and training providers. In particular, use has been made of the following case studies of training providers to gain an idea of the form of cooperation between SMEs and training providers:

#	*Name of the training provider*	#	*Name of the training provider*
BF5	VIZO	L2	Prolingua
D2	Weiterbildung Hamburg e.V.	L4	CFPC
D3	CERTQUA	P3	FUNDUTEC
E3	INEM	P6	IEFP
GR1	OAED	UK4	North Trafford College
GR4	IVEPE		

One thing is clear: improving the quality of cooperation between training providers and SMEs, and extending that

improvement to quality assurance procedures in continuing training, are central to any modernization of SMEs in Europe.

It is important, however, not to overlook the fact that in-house continuing training and its evaluation in large enterprises serves other purposes apart from providing necessary qualifications: functions associated with the filling of jobs and payment of bonuses, and functions associated with the implementing of changes in work organization. In small, less complex enterprises, these functions are usually performed in a less formalized way. Quality assurance in these cases, therefore, really is initially confined to planning continuing training measures and quantifying their success. It is at least doubtful, therefore, whether SMEs should be subjected to formalized and detailed training planning and quality assurance modelled on large-enterprise structures. It is precisely in SMEs which are unaccustomed to training that the application of oversize instruments can further increase possible reservations regarding continuing training for employees.

The relatively low level of planning intensity in SMEs extends to virtually all sectors, including the direct objectives of the enterprise, and is not confined to continuing training. If it is true that SMEs nevertheless do no worse than large enterprises in competition, dispensing with long-term planning must also involve advantages. An essential competitive advantage enjoyed by SMEs, for which they are envied by many large enterprises, especially today, is their flexibility. They can often react more quickly to changes in markets and technologies. As far as their employees are concerned, this means that they need employees whose qualifications ensure that they can come to grips with changing requirements in a short space of time, and that they can carry out a wide variety of different tasks on the basis of a less clearly marked division of labour. In order to

provide such qualifications, however, SMEs need not detailed long-term planning of all training measures but a continuous development of the potential - in other words, the flexibility and creativity - of their employees, combined with technical training courses which are triggered on an ad hoc basis by current needs. Quality assurance has to allow for this need.

Quality assurance in continuing training for SMEs has to be measured against whether it also provides usable concepts for their specific requirements.

Quality assurance concepts for SMEs are not "discarded" variations on models used by large enterprises but have to meet different criteria of their own. What may (still) make sense in a large enterprise can easily lead to bureaucratization and fossilization in SMEs. Measures to determine training needs and evaluate continuing training measures have to be in appropriate proportion to the financial, human and material resources available to medium-sized enterprises. Their scale, and the precision of their results, need to be measured not against academic standards but against the training problems which need to be solved.

The traditional product policy of training providers in the continuing training sector, offering a ready-to-use instructional concept or curriculum to the enterprises, is increasingly rejected, in particular by small and medium-sized enterprises. There seem to be three essential reasons for this:

- *First*, those employees of the SMEs who receive the offers are generally not specialists in career advancement or continuing training. This makes it correspondingly difficult for them to assess continuing training needs and select appropriate measures. In such cases, uncertainty often results in general rejection, shifting the responsibility for continuing training on to

the employees personally, criticizing the government training system, and a tendency to take a somewhat mistrustful view of providers of continuing training. Systematic planning of continuing training is an alien concept for most of these enterprises, and the flood of product brochures is perceived as more of a nuisance than a source of information. This means that traditional advertising strategies are targeting a clientele which has great difficulty in creating a link between the continuing training offered and its own everyday reality.

- *Secondly*, vocational learning, and especially continuous learning, in those enterprises where its importance is recognized is increasingly becoming an activity which is integrated with the working procedures, organization and working processes and so cannot readily be provided by external courses.

- Catchphrases such as "job-related learning", "integration of work and learning", enterprises as "learning organizations", make it clear that, especially in learning-intensive enterprises, such processes are recognized as exceptionally important for organizational development and, for that very reason, should primarily be integrated into the working routine.

Management roles within the enterprise take over continuing training functions, and continuing training becomes an instrument of management. If enterprises are serious about the strategic importance of personnel advancement, this must mean that continuing training processes take place as close as possible to the workplace, and that feedback takes place not only between learning and working but also between learning and organizational changes.

The concept of learning here is undergoing a change of significance. It is not only concerned with individual

employees being taught to do particular tasks better. It is also concerned with whole enterprises learning active skills of adaptation and innovation in changing markets. For this, too, the individual learning processes are naturally of central importance, but the subjects and objects of learning are changing greatly. If corporate learning is the objective, then the focal point of individual learning lies not in familiarization with certain technologies but in familiarization with the specific application of those technologies in the interests of the enterprise. Efficiency and creative improvement in job performance can best be learnt at the workplace, in the working environment.

- *Thirdly*, the orientation of content, organization and cost calculation of the continuing training services offered by external providers are still greatly influenced by academic principles. The aspect of practical application within the firm is not very pronounced.

  Accordingly, syllabuses are oriented towards ideas of completing coverage of a particular "subject", and are technically or scientifically centred rather than being oriented towards practical application. Organization of instruction is based on the school class principle, and this also applies to the cost calculation. Quite apart from the fact that such forms of instruction are unsuitable in terms of the current qualification requirements in modern enterprises, it is out of the question for SMEs to dispense with the services of several employees for an extended period and to fund the costs of doing so.

  The unsatisfactory situation of an unacceptable training product range on the one hand and a reluctant attitude towards continuing training on the part of SMEs on the other can only be eliminated by new forms of cooperation between training providers and firms which offer "tailor-made continuing training" for SMEs, too.

The case of *Prolingua, Luxembourg*, describes the planning and implementation of a tailor-made continuing training measure in the foreign language sector, carried out by the provider Prolingua in cooperation with a Luxembourg investment fund company.

A characteristic of this case is the unrestricted cooperation between the two partners even at the stage of planning and designing the continuing training measure. A five-stage procedure was used to produce joint solutions:

- an *entry test* establishes the linguistic competence of future participants. (This is done partly to describe shortcomings in skills and partly to form homogeneous groups for continuing training.)

- an *analysis of needs* identifies the precise linguistic skills needed in order to work in the various departments of the enterprise (reading, writing, listening and speaking in the foreign language).

- a *joint agreement on content* by future participants and Prolingua employees, based on the analysis of needs.

- *the selection and training* of the lecturers.

- the *selection of the training material*, taking into account working practice in the investment business.

This procedure is formally guaranteed through quality assurance agreements, and various instruments are used to evaluate the results of the measure:

"Methods of implementation:

A number of methods have been employed to ensure quality

- Evaluation of the participants after the course, in the form of tests

- Reports by instructors on the progress of the course, submitted to the person responsible for training.

- "Self-assessment" questionnaires for participants.

- Feedback request sent to companies (poor response rate)

- Supervision by the Prolingua management during the course. In general, one of the members of the management participates in one of the sessions to give an assessment of the conditions under which the course is being held." [L2].

What seems important in general terms about this procedure is that this form of "tailoring" continuing training gives rise to a new, independent form of cooperation between training provider and firm, which is itself subject to quality assurance.

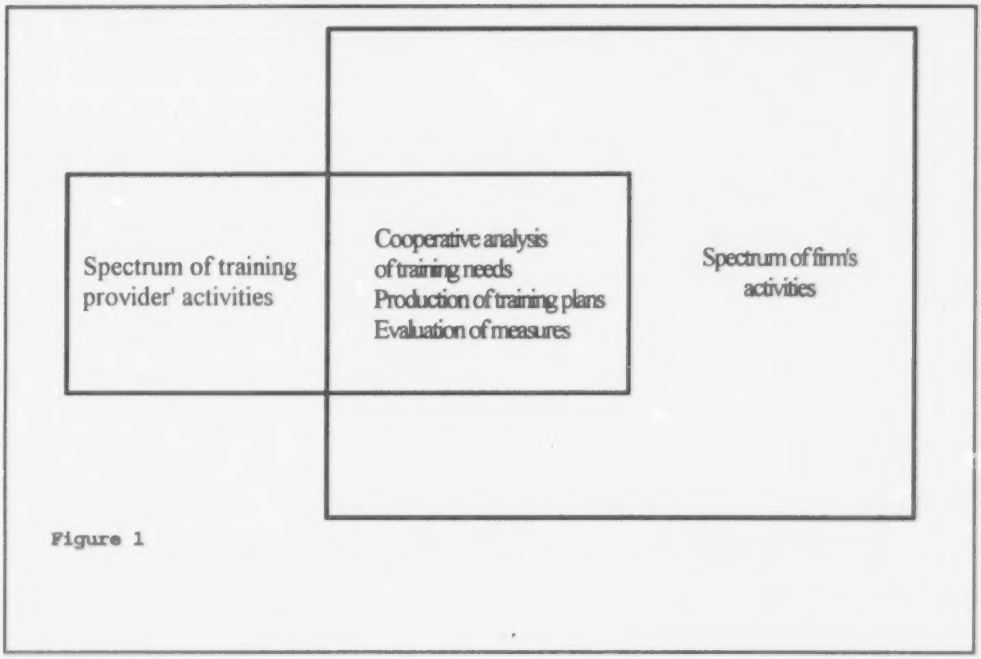

Spectrum of training provider' activities
Cooperative analysis of training needs
Production of training plans
Evaluation of measures
Spectrum of firm's activities

Figure 1

What is created is an area of joint activities and responsibilities whose various compartments - analysis of training demands, planning and implementation of the continuing training and evaluation of measures - also require joint quality assurance.

- Agreements on suitable procedures for the *analysis of needs* are necessary. The respective shares of the partners involved have to be fixed and reviewed.

- The *preparation of the continuing training plan* (content, methods, organization) and the implementation of the continuing training (lecturers, infrastructure, materials, etc.) have to follow mutually agreed criteria and rules, and be subject to review.

- The *evaluation* is based on jointly designated success criteria, agreed forms of measurement and valid instruments and methods.

Cases illustrating this type of cooperation between training provider and SME generally make it clear that no ideas exist regarding quality assurance of this cooper-

ation itself.

Depending on the case, either the training providers design their contribution to this kind of cooperation with reference to agreed quality concepts, or the firms pursue their continuing training activities in the light of quality assurance aspects and the role of the providers is based on this. This is only natural, since this form of cooperation is still very new and cannot itself be a subject for quality assurance.

It follows that both partners to the cooperation have to aim at, and monitor, quality improvements and quality assurance measures. Since SMEs generally do not employ specialists in continuing training matters, it often falls to the providers to take the initiative. This is confirmed by the documented cases from the Member States. Increasingly, training providers endeavour to provide quality assurance in their cooperation with firms. They do this primarily for marketing reasons in increasingly competitive markets [cf. Chapter 3]. Government training providers have also made the selective promotion of SMEs a central concern.

Attempts by training providers to improve the quality of their cooperation with SMEs are documented in the following cases, among others:

An example of how a provider improves its competencies - and hence the long-term quality of its measures - by offering job-related continuing training can be found in the *British* case study:

"*North Trafford College*, Manchester specializes in the delivery of general, vocational and customised programmes of training to industry, commerce and community on a local, national and international basis. A large proportion of training and tuition is designed, developed and delivered in the workplace itself. Such flexibility in approach enables industry to develop an effective, technically proficient workforce without disruption to staffing levels of work schedules. At the same time the College is provided with a continuously updated knowledge of the particular needs of the client industries and their employees."

In the case described, North Trafford College ran continuing training courses for Hays Chemical Distribution Ltd, a medium-size chemical company. The object was to convert the NVQ standards into "process operations" at Hays. The training provider had previously collaborated on the initial planning of the training and analysis of needs, together with company experts. The analysis of training needs was able to draw on the company's established employee assessment system. Quality assurance measures for the training were planned and implemented jointly, the preceding assessment was undertaken by the provider and the company separately and independently of each other.

North Trafford College in the United Kingdom tries to structure the quality assurance in cooperation with client firms on a partnership basis, the quality assurance measures being adopted independently by the two partners in their respective areas of responsibility. These include measures for the formative evaluation of the cooperation process.

"College trainers discuss matters of quality and progress with the personnel manager, mentors and students frequently. Feedback between trainer and trainee is continuous. The Company provides a full complement of resources to support trainees e.g. training facilities, text books/work manuals, stationery etc. in order to help make the learning as barrier free as possible. Tutor marked assignments are channelled through the Personnel Manager to trainees. In this way, progress is further monitored, deadlines adhered to and extra help provided if needed. Counselling, to combat the fear of learning often experienced in mature trainees long past compulsory and initial formal education, is provided by both tutors and the Personnel Manager."

This case study shows how the quality of continuing training can be efficiently measured and improved if both sides - training provider and firm - make their existing instruments and resources available to each other. The training provider sums up appropriately:

"The close relationship with the Company provides mutual knowledge of culture, needs and understanding. Success breeds success and helps to ensure the future of the College service" [UK3].

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The *Labour Institute of the General Workers' Confederation of Greece* (INE/GSEE) aims to develop, in addition to conventional vocational training measures and the training of union officials, "inside and outside of the companies training activities applying participatory training methods that primary aim at the training of decision-makers, administrators, training developers and trainers in order to develop and support the function of training structures inside the companies". Consequently, the firm's competence for independent continuing training is improved by an external training provider [GR5].

CFPC, a government continuing training institution in *Luxembourg*, is trying, by way of a pilot project (FORCE), to implement a joint continuing training scheme with a retail supermarket. Quality assurance elements have been designed and applied for this purpose:

"*Control and monitoring of the partnership:* regular meetings throughout the year are planned, at which working plans will be drawn up, distributing the tasks within the various groups. The results of these joint deliberations will make it possible to prepare the content of the various branches and to produce the instructional support equipment for the proposed forms of training. ...

The 'QUALITY ASSURANCE' procedures set up: The Quality Assurance procedures defined by the partners under the FORCE project are based on:

- A partnership-based training installation between enterprises (including the MD, the managers and the 'trained employees') and training centres.
- The training plan which adheres in detail to the various stages of the training course
- A pilot project making it possible to regulate the training developed between private and public partners
- The selection of 'trained persons' by the active staff on site
- Integration of the training times into working hours
- The definition of the instructional content after the production of the job descriptions
- Acceptance of responsibility for the financial aspect of the training (FORCE project)
- Use of a tutor who is an employee of the enterprise
- Scheme combining training and work (action training)
- Assessment meetings with a 'trained' tutor and CFPC
- Self-assessment meetings enabling each participant to be called into question and analysed
- Certification backed up by internal certification from the enterprises concerned, with the possibility of promotion depending on the positions available" [L3].

On the other hand, however, it is quite apparent from some of the documented cases that SMEs, too, take the initiative and make independent efforts to produce criteria and procedural forms for improved cooperation with external training providers.

The *French* firm *Raymond Geoffray*, a small enterprise with 36 employees which produces preserved foods, has been involved since 1991 in the process of improving the quality of its organization, with a view to certification under AFAQ 1995.

In the course of these efforts to modernize the firm, comprehensive continuing training for staff and quality assurance in that sector became necessary. Analyses of activities and training needs revealed defects in the employees' key qualifications (lack of flexibility, willingness to take responsibility, etc.) in the field of technological learning processes and especially in hygiene standards.

In consultation with an external training provider, training plans were drawn up, implementation strategies were developed and carried out, and an attempt was made to evaluate the procedure.

Apart from the beneficial effects on the quality of the firm's production, one result is a broad general commitment by the entire workforce to all the firm's interests. This also applies to the actual continuing training, which takes place more and more frequently at the workplace through reciprocal learning. Informal team activities take place with a view to planning and implementing continuing training.

Despite all this, we encounter the typical problems experienced by SMEs when undertaking continuing training: cost pressure and organizational problems permit only a gradual (step-by-step) progress towards new lines of organizational and human resources development. Evaluation remains a problem: it is not always possible to comply exactly with the continuing training plans.

But the case also shows clearly that, and how, SMEs can treat the costs of continuing training as an investment and, through considerations of quality, succeed in improving continuing training and employee motivation. Increasing competence in continuing training matters also finds expression in new requirements which external providers are asked to meet. The firm is demanding greater market transparency in this sector through quality certification of the providers [F3].

In terms of content, the cooperation to be encouraged between training providers and firms for the purposes of adequately planned continuing training in SMEs can be described in somewhat greater detail.

In the description which follows, a distinction is made between the analysis of training needs, planning and implementation, and evaluation, as the separate stages of cooperation.

2.2.1 Cooperation in the analysis of training demand

Analysis of training needs and a training advisory service are the logical first stage of cooperation between provider and firm. This phase is to ensure the active *involvement of all concerned*, and must take the form of a *joint action*. A cooperative model of analysis of needs becomes necessary, using external expert knowledge as well as in-house know-how in order to initiate optional planning of human resources development. Employee acceptance and necessary motivation to master the implementation of technology and the obstacles to continuing training are additionally ensured through *employee participation in this planning*. This means that the provider's external experts merely provide information and advice, while the employees and the management make joint decisions.

An analysis of training needs carried out in this way simultaneously becomes a permanent process of organizational and human resources development, following the concept of an enterprise as a "learning organization". Internal continuing training groups would be an example of such innovation (cf. the outline description of the French firm Raymond Geoffray [F3]).

Quality assurance in cooperation between SMEs and training providers would therefore have to ensure a procedure for analysing training needs which guarantees active employee participation in that analysis as well as the processing of the external expert reports and the commitment of management. In addition, the continuity of the process should be guaranteed by the organizational arrangements.

Approaches to the analysis of training needs as a cooperative process between provider and firm can be found in a number of documented cases [L2: Prolingua, L3: CFPC, UK4: North Trafford College, BF5: VIZO, F5: CESI, F6:

GRETA, etc.].

In some cases, the training advisory service and evaluation are provided in the form of a service by separate, multi-provider institutions:

In the case of a medium-sized *Irish* food processor, although the analysis of training needs was undertaken by the management of the firm, this was "in consultations with the FAS Service to Industry Adviser. ... A FAS services to industry adviser assisted the company executives in drawing up the plan. The adviser helped in the formulation of the training needs identification and recommended a competent provider. ... A tripartite relationship exists between the FAS training adviser, the company executives and the training providers". On this basis, objectives and procedures were developed to suit the firm's needs. A cooperative evaluation by FAS, the training provider and the firm made it possible to acquire data on transferring what had been learnt into practical use, and to employ formal instruments of evaluation available to the FAS and/or the training provider.

"The formal inputs combined with the workplace demonstrations and practice were very powerful and effective in ensuring a transfer to the workplace for the learners and the relevance of the formal inputs to the providers". [IR1].

Verein Weiterbildung Hamburg e.V. treats advisory services offered by the providers belonging to it as an explicit quality criterion. The advisory service is not intended to be directed at firms alone, but also relates to the individual participant. In the case study, a definition of the organizational prerequisites for the advisory service is reproduced: "For potential customers, the possibility of an appropriate advisory service by informed employees must exist. Potential customers must also be able to inspect the local lecture rooms/training facilities before the start of an event. For each event, there is one contact responsible; enough time is available to discuss course-related problems. In addition, advice is offered on more advanced training measures." As a result of the advisory service activities, it is found that the customers' judgements have become more competent and their wishes more specific.

2.2.2 Cooperation in planning and implementation

The emphasis here is on the planning and implementation of "tailor-made continuing training", even for small and medium-sized enterprises, at prices that can be financed and with adequate organizational forms. In addition to determining training needs, the needs analysis must also take into account the firm's financial and organizational limitations and, in that light, result in feasible curricula.

In addition to the provision of flexible, combinable

continuing training modules, continuing training in SMEs also means the organization of combinations of learning locations and well matched combinations of providers. In particular, external support for the workplace as a learning location, support for self-instruction and the logical integration of manufacturer training courses into an overall learning concept are designed to make continuing training financially and organizationally practicable even for small and medium-sized enterprises. The use of combinable modules helps to make the specific product easier to finance and organize.

Quality assurance in cooperation on the stage of joint planning and implementation must, then, guarantee the appropriateness of continuing training aims, contents and methods, and also of the organization and financial practicability of the continuing training. Consequently the following questions should be put, as a minimum:

- Do the objectives and content of the continuing training conform to the firm's strategy, and are they conclusively derived from the analysis of training needs?

- Do the learning and teaching methods conform to the objectives of the continuing training, and is the content an optimum vector for them?

- Does the organization of the learning, in terms of time and location, conform to the firm's objectives and the needs of the participants? Has the right learning location been selected for the learning objective?

- Are the costs of continuing training sufficient for the project and supportable for the firm?

- Are the external provider's and firm's continuing training personnel up to the job?

- Are other partners involved in the cooperation (training providers, manufacturers, consultants)?

- Is the training provider in a position to undertake the necessary advisory and planning work?

2.2.3 Cooperation in evaluation

The joint assessment and evaluation of the training measures, during and after the continuing training course, is used for quality assurance and the preparation of further measures.

This assessment centres on jointly devised success criteria which measure the success of the continuing training in terms of the practical implementation of what has been learnt in the firm's routine work, against the background of its objectives. In some of the documented cases, the providers of continuing training assume that the current instruments for measuring participant acceptance, and tests oriented toward learning objectives with ultimate certification, are of only limited interest to the firm. The target of the joint efforts at evaluation must be at least a plausible link between continuing training and economic parameters. Changes in the quality and productivity of work can be brought about by such shared levels of plausibility.

It is apparent from all the documented cases, and from the expert's judgements, that the evaluation of continuing training activities is, naturally a central requirement of any form of quality assurance in continuing training; but that this has been a weak point in previous efforts to improve and assure quality. Cf., for example, Joël Bonamy in the *French* study:

"A second problematical aspect relates to the evaluation of the training. The intangible nature of the service and its effects, and the time frame within which they appear, have not made it possible to identify satisfactory methods of evaluation. The effects of a training service are not directly observable, but become apparent only through the implementation of the skills acquired. They are thus difficult to separate from the overall effects of the productive environment. Enterprises, then, fluctuate between evaluating the trainer's respect for his contractual commitment, which says nothing about the effects, and evaluating indirect effects which provide little information on the relevance of the training. The difficulties of ex post measurement are likely to encourage the development of dynamic evaluation, making it possible to steer and adapt the training upstream, especially in the actual teaching process. The diffuse nature of the effects of training and the problems with evaluating them have significant effects for the providers, especially as regards the justification of their activities" [F].

There is general agreement that a crucial evaluation criterion should be how much benefit the firm actually derives in terms of economic success from what is learnt. There is equal unanimity in pointing out the problems of quantifiably proving that continuing training produces such effects. In the cases considered here, the practice of evaluation relies upon a great many auxiliary constructions, ranging from measurement of participants' and supervisors' acceptance through test methods oriented toward learning aims, to attempts at measuring the transfer of the material learnt by questioning former participants and their supervisors after the event.

However, there is nothing wrong with any of these methods and instruments provided that all those involved are clearly aware that each measurement is only relative. Questions relating to participants' satisfaction with a continuing training measure certainly provide information as to participants' feelings about whether there is a pleasant learning atmosphere, whether they are happy with the content, lecturers and media, etc.. But, of course, such questions elicit no information on the quality of the content, the efficiency with which it is imparted,

the applicability of what has been learnt to the workplace, or even the economic benefit which the firm can derive from the trained employee.

One way of improving the defective efforts at evaluation certainly seems to be reviewing existing methods and instruments critically, to determine how well they meet criteria, and combining them systematically as a way of evaluating their compliance with the maximum number of criteria for continuing training quality.

Evaluation in continuing training practice is usually not an end in itself, but is expected to serve as a constituent of quality assurance, to optimize continuing training processes, to correct undesirable trends and to strengthen successes. It is directed at *the fundamentally formative nature of all efforts at evaluation in the context of quality assurance*.

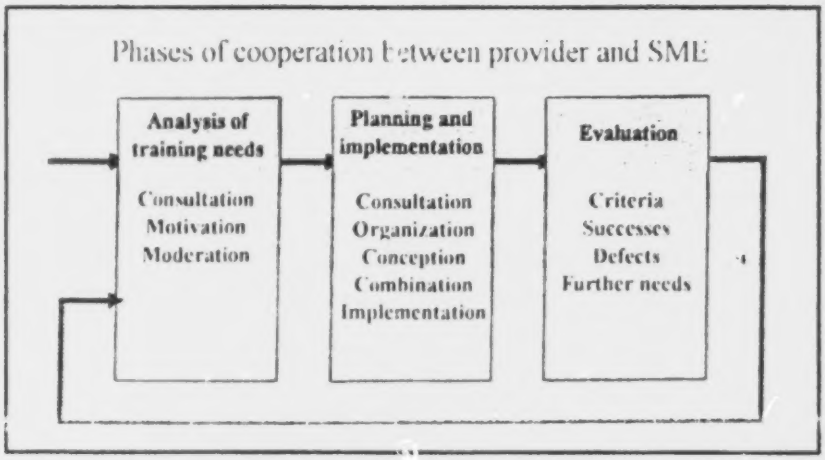
The objective, then, is the earliest possible feedback between a continuing training activity and its evaluation. This is the only way in which undesirable trends can be avoided and unnecessary costs saved. Since, ultimately, the transfer of learning to the workplace and the benefit to the firm that results form this is the objective of continuing training, evaluation must create systematic opportunities for feedback between the real working world and the learning situation at the earliest possible stage in the learning process, and with constant repetition.

An important element of such formative evaluation in all phases of the continuing training process is *the self-assessment of participants, lecturers and managers*. In particular, critical analysis of one's own skills, shortcomings and added competencies as a result of continuing training by the participants in it is an ideal method for evaluation in the process of quality assurance in continuing training.

2.2.4 Systems of cooperative quality assurance

In the ideal case, the cooperation between firm and training provider over the three stages referred to should be stabilized as a feedback loop, and planned on this basis in the long term.

Establishing the cooperation as a long-term and multi-dimensional production/consumption of service can be achieved through evaluation and follow-up. This evaluation highlights additional continuing training needs, etc..



The stages of cooperation between training provider and SME, as described, point to the need for the training provider to be able to provide additional advisory services.

Advisory services are a necessary part of the product, for the analysis of needs, for the planning and organization of the tailored continuing training measure, and for its evaluation. These advisory services require knowledge of technology, work organization, teaching techniques and social sciences.

The French case of *GRETA Est-Essonne* is relevant here:

"*The effects of the quality approach:* This quality-based work has produced significant effects; it tends to transform the way in which training matters are approached, with a move away from an approach centred on the course and the satisfaction of the trainee and the client at the outcome of the course towards thoughts of a more comprehensive management of the system as a whole. After the preparation of the quality manual and procedures, a great deal of work remained to be done to establish the concept of quality. The internal instrumentation goes through a stage of activities which have to move beyond the reflex of an identity centred on the establishment to which one belongs, and become a joint enterprise/GRETA culture.

This change in behaviour and mentality is also necessary in order to meet client's requirements. For business and government clients, an important criterion is speed of response. This calls for internal management, to ensure that the proposals match up with the real capacities the establishments can mobilize, and that implementation takes place in such a way that the deadlines set by one side are taken into account in the other side's action plans. For enterprises, in particular, this type of attitude by GRETA makes it possible to establish a climate of trust and to embark on a dialogue in which GRETA can play the part of consultant" [F6].

A number of questions are raised here regarding the professionalization of this new function in the training sector. Questions have to be answered about the qualification profile, the right curricula for creating this profile, and demarcations between responsibilities. Clarifying the possibility of financing this advisory service is of comparable importance. Direct payment by the customer and hybrid financing via course fees are being tested. Materials and instruments for supporting this advisory service have to be available.

What has been said above means that continuing training providers, as partners in cooperative projects with firms, have to work jointly on the analysis of the training needs, the preparation and implementation of tailor-made curricula, and the evaluation of the measures against the background of the firm's economic parameters. The criterion for this cooperation is always the benefit to be gained by the customer - in other words, the firm. Such concepts of cooperation imply drastic needs for restructuring on the part of the providers of continuing training who are now active in the marketplace. The shift in their range of services away from the implementation

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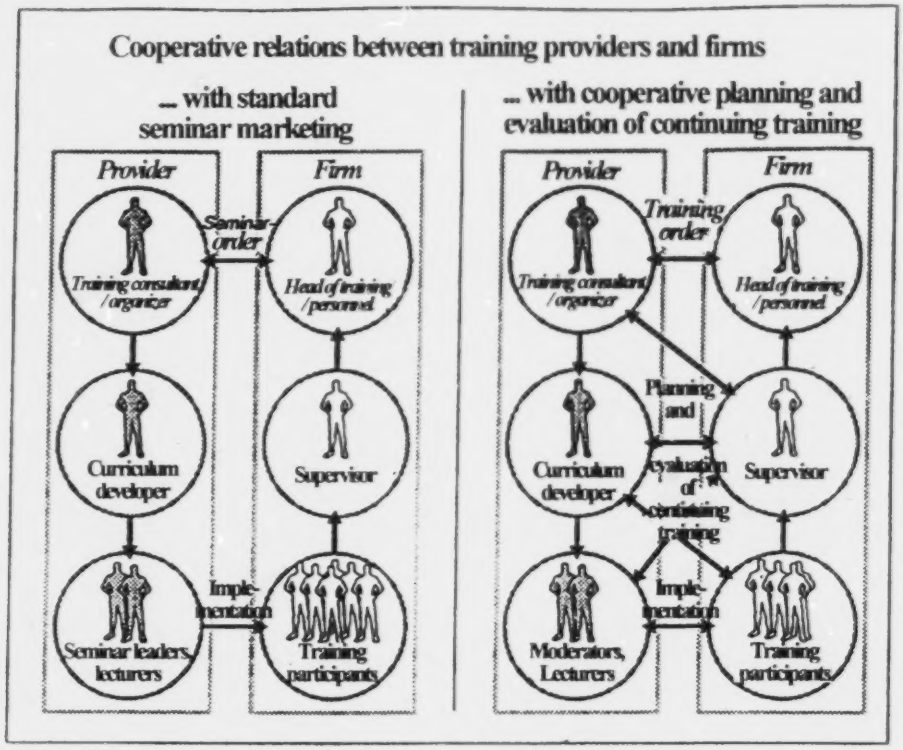
of measures towards an advisory and follow-up service involves the providers in a new personnel policy and new, more flexible forms of organization tending towards process orientation.

Current surveys of SMEs confirm this need. On the other hand, however, such processes of change are still being obstructed by traditional "academic orientations" in the case of many providers of training. There is a need for new forms of cooperation between SMEs and external training providers, moving towards the concept of the "learning organization".



In principle, the external provider in this case takes on the role of the career development/continuing training department in a large enterprise. In other words he helps to develop job-related learning and assists these processes of learning and development within the organization.

This allocation of roles between SMEs and training providers can be identified, in outline, in the quality assurance efforts recorded in the documented cases of training providers. In *Portugal*, *Spain* and *Greece* it is mainly the government institutions IEFP, INEM and OAED which provide multiple services for SMEs.

CESI and GRETA in *France* also endeavour, as part of their customer orientation and internal quality assurance, to acquire the new competencies for the necessary services. Similar considerations apply to the cases of Prolingua and CFPC in Luxembourg.

In *Germany*, an attempt is also being made to establish a new concept of service among training providers by way of certification and/or self-monitoring on their part (CERTQUA and Weiterbildung Hamburg e.V.). In the *Belgian* cases of VDAB and ViZO, this is also the aim.

Overall, it becomes apparent that both government and private training providers are increasingly recognizing the necessity for these new forms of service and cooperation and are structuring their quality assurance efforts accordingly.

This role, however, can be taken over by external providers only if they make major efforts to develop their organization towards integrated services, customer orientation and project orientation. The traditional product orientation, with a product range policy to match, is becoming increasingly obsolete on the continuing training markets, as elsewhere.

The point of these remarks is to make clear the medium- and long-term development trends in what business customers will expect of providers of continuing training.

2.3 Quality assurance in continuing training cooperation between firms and training providers

From all the documented cases of quality assurance in continuing training from the Member States involved, it is apparent that cooperation between firms and external training providers is becoming increasingly important in the world of continuing training. This applies to

continuing training not only for large enterprises but also for small and medium-sized enterprises.

Quality assurance in continuing training, in cooperative projects between firms and external providers, naturally relates to the same subjects and processes as it does within the firms themselves. Here again, the aim is to *integrate the continuing training process into the strategic corporate aims*, and accordingly ...

- to ascertain training needs,
- to draw up continuing training strategies,
- to define the content of continuing training,
- to define methods of instruction and materials,
- to make available the human and material resources for continuing training,
- to arrange financing,
- to guarantee organization,
- to ensure that the continuing training takes place,
- to evaluate the intermediate and final results of the continuing training.

It is also the function of quality assurance in the types of cooperation that take place between firm and training provider to supervise and optimize the various stages of the continuing training process and the overall process in such a way as continuously to ensure and/or improve its quality. A complicating factor in the cooperation between provider and firm is that two partners with different initial positions have to deal with the same process.

- *Large enterprises* tend to solve this problem by themselves taking over the dominant role in quality assurance, giving the training providers precise instructions in the form a specification and themselves ensuring conformity with that specification (the Renault case).

- *SMEs* are able to play this dominant role only in exceptional cases; they rely on external assistance in the processes of planning the continuing training and quality assurance.

- *Training providers* tackle the problem in different ways: in some cases, they themselves endeavour to introduce quality assurance measures into their cooperation with firms. In particular, providers with a strong background in the industry attempt to analyse training needs in advance and to involve appropriate expert knowledge from the firms in their own organization processes. Other training providers aim to obtain certification of their organization under standard series EN ISO 9000 or national standard, claiming that this is a way of preparing themselves for cooperation with firms.

An example of a third possible line of development can be seen in the case GRETA Est-Essonne. This is the attempt by a training provider to become regularly involved in *regional networks of firms and training providers*, or to inspire and stimulate such link-ups. This approach seems particularly suitable for meeting SMEs' needs in respect of multidimensional information and continuing training. Here again, the training provider becomes the consultant and provider of services which other institutions offer [F6].

It must be assumed, however, that apart from the documented "model training providers", there are many training providers in Europe for whom "tailoring" is no more than a word and quality assurance an alien term.

Whereas cooperation between large enterprises and training providers will continue to be determined by the dominance and competence of the large enterprise in

continuing training matters, the installation of suitable forms of cooperation between SMEs and training providers (which is very important for the European economy) needs further development work. To improve the quality of this cooperation, and to provide quality assurance, both partners need support in the form of information, practical recommendations, materials and instruments.

These products of future development work should enable SMEs and training providers to set up cooperative continuing training projects and optimize their respective roles as partners in those projects. The documented cases and the judgements of the national experts provide, in the development and testing of suitable aids for cooperation between SMEs and training providers, a possible field for quality assurance projects in continuing training under LEONARDO.

E. The role of the European standard series EN ISO 9000 in quality management of continuing vocational training

E.0 Introduction

Standards EN ISO 9000 to 9004, etc., are being applied increasingly in Europe's manufacturing industry. This series of standards deals with the setting-up of quality management systems.

In many of the documented cases of quality assurance in in-house continuing training, this standard also plays a prominent role:

- On the one hand, certification of firms in accordance with the procedural guidelines of standard series EN ISO 9000 affects questions of employees' continuing training. The internal application of the standard requires extensive training measures for the work force. In the case studies, this happens in the following cases:

#	Name	Country	Industry	*EN ISO 9000*
BF1	ATEA N.V.	Belgium	Electronics, communications technology	yes
E4	Dragados y Construcciones	Spain	Building	yes
F1	SOLLAC	France	Steel	yes
F4	Renault	France	Motor	yes
IRL1	?	Ireland	Food processing	ongoing
IRL2	?	Ireland	Food producer	ongoing
IRL3	?	Ireland	Printing and paper	planned
IRL4	?	Ireland	Health care products	yes
L1	ARBED	Luxembourg	Steel	yes
L4	Du Pont	Luxembourg	Chemical	yes
(P1)	Renault Portugal	Portugal	Motor	yes
UK3	Walker Financial Solutions Ltd	United Kingdom	DP systems house	yes
UK4	Hays Chemical Distribution Ltd	United Kingdom	Chemical	ongoing

- On the other hand, standard series EN ISO 9000 also applies directly to continuing training services, and so affects the quality management both of in-house

continuing training departments and of external training providers. This relates to the following documented case studies:

#	Name	Country	Type of training provider	EN ISO 9000
BF6	VDAB	Belgium		ongoing
F5	CESI-Normandie	France		yes
(DE3)	IBN Bildungsgesellschaft mbH	Germany	CT for firms	yes
(DE3)	TÜV-Academy (Bavaria, Hanover/Saxony-Anhalt, Hesse, Saxony)	Germany		yes
GR4	The Companies Institute for the Industrial and Professional Training of their Staff (IVEPE)	Greece		ongoing
P4	Renault Portugal	Portugal	Training department	AFQ*
UK1	Bowles Outdoor Centre	United Kingdom	Outdoor education	yes
(UK4)	North Trafford College	United Kingdom	CT for industry	ongoing

To illustrate the use of EN ISO 9000 for quality assurance in in-house continuing training, we will start with a general digression regarding the principles of ISO certification, and then describe the part played by ISO certification in individual case studies.

E.1 Certification of the firms to EN ISO 9000 - effects in in-house continuing training

In a world in which mass markets are changing to buyers' markets, competition between companies in the manufacturing and services sectors largely takes place through the *quality of the products or services*. Customary quality assurance procedures are based on spot checks or general quality inspections. In such procedures, a reduction in the costs of complaints, customer cultivation and service is frequently offset by a proportional increase in the costs of quality inspection. Not only are the inspection procedures themselves expensive, but defective products are not separated out until after manufacture or even after further processing. The earlier in the production or service process errors are identi-

* AFQ: National standard based on Standard Series EN ISO 9000

fied and their sources eliminated, the lower will be the economic cost of ensuring quality. From this standpoint, many European firms are particularly careful in dealing with quality assurance matters in the actual development departments. In manufacturing industry, in particular, a number of quality assurance methods have been developed which have been modified according to requirements (Pareto Analysis, ABC Analysis, Failure Mode and Effect Analysis [FMEA], etc.).

EN ISO Standard 9000 now provides a standardized, uniform method, not dependent on the particular firm and product, which covers the organization of quality assurance. Certification by independent third parties that the standard is being applied in audits (based on EN ISO 10011, Parts 1 to 3) ensures the functioning of the quality management system and the customer's confidence in the quality of products or services.

This series of standards, originally formulated as a national British Standard (BS 5750), was adopted in 1987 by the CEN (European Committee for Standardization) and introduced worldwide as ISO 9000 to 9004. It replaces various national quality assurance standards. Since August 1994, the term "quality management" has replaced "quality assurance" as the central concept of this series of standards, which is subdivided into the following sections *[IRL]*:

- EN ISO 9000 — Guidelines for selection and use of standards
- EN ISO 9001 — Model for design/development, production/installation and servicing
- EN ISO 9002 — Model for production and installation
- EN ISO 9003 — Model for final inspection and test
- EN ISO 9004 — Quality management, quality system elements
- EN ISO 9004, Part 2 — The services standard

- Of supplementary importance are standards ISO 8402, Part 1 (Quality vocabulary - International terms; ISO 8402, Part 2 (National terms), ISO 10011:1-3, and various national quality assurance standards which have not hitherto been harmonized on a European basis.

EN ISO standard series 9000 is not concerned with the quality features of particular products or services, in the same way as traditional methods of input and output evaluation, but defines the organization of quality assurance - *quality management* - in a global perspective. As an open standard, it leaves it up to the users' discretion to define the various criteria for product quality. Taking the customers' requirements as the starting point, it describes methods of structural and procedural organization for ensuring the quality of products and services. The ISO standard thus starts from a process model of quality assurance - errors are to be continuously identified and eliminated where they arise, rather than at the end of the production process.

From this standpoint, particular importance attaches to the *qualifications of the workforce* at all levels of the organization. They have to know what is required of them in their work and the relationship between that work and the firm's objective; they must have authority to act in line with that knowledge; and they must be able to judge the results of their work from quality standpoints. "Quality assurance" of production and services, within the meaning of standard series EN ISO 9000, is therefore essentially defined as a question of motivation, qualification and quality awareness of employees at all levels in the hierarchy. In order to comply with the requirements and recommendations of this series of standards, the in-house training system or career advancement must be structured accordingly. The standards form the framework for the general objectives and procedural principles.

For this reason, it is not surprising that the certification of firms under EN ISO 9000 involves a major

training effort. EN ISO 9001 includes "Training" as an independent quality feature (#4.18) for establishing and maintaining adequate qualifications for the workforce. Specifically, the following sets of tasks arise (cf. ISO EN 9004, Part 2, Section 5.3.2.2: "Training and personnel advancement"):

- providing all employees with information and training relating to the firm's quality policy;

- carrying out appropriate training programmes for all employees;

- careful verification of the qualifications needed by the personnel in view of the work which is being done or is to be done;

- classification of employees' performance requirements, to take account of their development needs and capabilities (e.g. through employee talks);

- the provision of training, in particular, to those employees who join the firm, change their area of work or maintain contact with the firms's external interfaces, and an annual assessment of needs, budget planning and budget control;

- the documentation, supervision and evaluation of all training activities.

ATEA NV., Belgium (Flemish community), has had its production procedures certified under ISO EN 9001. This made it necessary to introduce a continuing training plan for new employees, or for employees changing their jobs. After the end of the course an evaluation sheet is completed, documenting the achievement of objectives in the EN ISO 9000 system. This example represents an ideal type for many certified firms: the general introduction of a quality management system means that the functionality of the training department for the firm is initially defined and then constantly assessed. Quality assurance, therefore, relates not to the training department in isolation but to the interaction of the training department with the firm as a whole [BF1].

An *Irish food and tobacco processor* with 32 employees is currently setting up a quality management system under EN ISO 9000, in order to improve product quality and produce the reject rate. The training processes necessary for the ISO certification include an evaluation of the transfer of the knowledge acquired into the working process. The mechanisms provided by ISO EN 9000 ensure that feedback from customers, suppliers and service providers is incorporated into the training plans [IRL1].

In the case of the *French* steel producer *SOLLAC*, a description is given of how the introduction of quality management under ISO 9002 changes the perspectives of continuing training:

"*Integration of the training system into group quality assurance:* ... While the new training rationalization policy was being established, all the factories in the group had to be certified to standard ISO 9002. The objective was to conform to customers' requirements, and especially those of customers in the motor industry who impose even stricter standards.

Certification was carried out independently of the human resources and training managements, because traditionally there was no contact between quality management and training management in this sector. The large-scale strikes in the iron and steel industry in 1970 had led managing directors to set up, alongside human resources (employment, pay, training), quality managements responsible for developing participation (motivation, management, etc.), in parallel to the union channel. However, ISO 9002 caused the works to specify their training needs (Chapter 18 of standard ISO 9002 contains a somewhat imprecise paragraph on training) and refer to head office.

Then the entire group, including head office, had to be certified to ISO 9001. Consequently, the section on training had to be made more specific. This was an opportunity to clarify responsibilities in the quality manual especially responsibilities as regards who does what in the matter of the respective competencies of head office and the works."

E.2 Certification of training providers and in-house training departments under the EN ISO 9000 standard series

In more recent times, training providers and in-house continuing training departments have not only been indirectly affected by the effects of ISO certification

of internal quality management systems, but have also been certified directly themselves. In the introductions to many national case studies, reference is made to the special role of the ISO standard for assuring the quality of training providers and training departments. Quality management in the services sector, in other words including continuing training, is described in a separate standard (EN ISO 9004-2).

The certification of in-house training departments or training providers under standard series EN ISO 9000 can be summarized as follows:

- It is the management of the training facility's quality assurance that is certified, not the individual training measure. The certification thus regularly relates to entire firms or parts of firms with which the training facility deals, not individual products or types of product. The certification applies to the *process* of providing a service by a training institution. Its successful granting means that the training institution is capable of complying with self-imposed quality criteria derived from client's requirements.

- The requirements of the customers or clients are the central criterion for the quality of continuing training. These requirements are defined in a quality management manual [QMM] on the basis of facts determined by the management level of the training institutions.

- Within the training institution, written quality guidelines are drawn up and continuously updated, containing introductions to and instructions on typical working procedures and process steps. The process regulations contained in manuals have to be inherently suitable for ensuring the quality of the training measures.

- As a rule, the QM elements contained in EN ISO 9001 are adopted as a structural outline of the description of the quality management system in the quality management manual. These elements are:

1	Senior management responsibility	11	Inspection, measuring and test equipment
2	Quality assurance system	12	Inspection and test status
3	Contract review	13	Control of nonconforming products
4	Design control	14	Corrective action
5	Document control	15	Handling, storage, packaging and delivery
6	Purchasing	16	Quality records
7	Purchaser supplied products	17	Internal quality audits
8	Product identification and traceability	18	Training/personnel
9	Process control	19	Servicing
10	Inspection and testing	20	Statistical techniques

These product- and service-independent quality features, evidently, do not directly fit in with the service of continuing training. Before any certification of training institutions, they first have to be "transferred", meaning interpreted and supplemented in relation to the procedures and structure of a training provider or a training department. This transfer has already been intensively discussed in various countries and resulted in successful certifications (e.g. DE, IR, UK), while in others it has only just begun in the course of the first EN ISO certifications.

- The practical implementation of the guidelines contained in the quality manuals takes the form of organizational, hierarchical and qualificatory measures. Implementation is continuously reviewed in internal *audits*. *External audits* by independent third parties (generally assigned by a certification association which for its part is accredited under standard EN ISO 45012) take place before the granting of an

EN ISO certificate, and from then on at about three-yearly intervals.

In the *Federal Republic of Germany* there are admittedly, at present, more than 20 accredited certification centres undertaking audits under the standard series EN ISO 9000. The central associations of German industry founded *CERTQUA GmbH* as a certification centre for training providers and in-house training departments with a specific view to the needs of vocational and in-house training. CERTQUA's objectives are documented in the German case study. CERTQUA has adopted the objective of incorporating the special framework conditions and requirements of non-state-regulated vocational training into its certifications under the "product-neutral" EN ISO standard. This objective is also of interest to training institutions associated with large enterprises, most of which have hitherto been, as it were "co-certified" in the course of the certification of the whole enterprise by auditors outside the training sector, and often have no opportunity to introduce educationally grounded quality assurance methods into the EN ISO procedures. The work done by CERTQUA is currently (December 94) in its initial stages, so that no practical experience can yet be reported [D3].

A clear and detailed description of quality assurance by certification of a QM system under EN ISO 9000 is to be found in [BF6]:

In 1993, the management of *VDAB*, a Belgian training institution, introduced a quality assurance programme which was aimed at all the approximately 700 lecturers. Until the programme had been completed, the quality of courses was to be ensured by their centralized development and distribution. However, the size of the institution meant that the uniform quality of the continuing training products could no longer be guaranteed by a centralized controlling office. "In order to master the non-quality-problems ..., good-will, crisis management, training programs, and seminars are not sufficient. In a large training-institute as the VDAB, that operates in different regions, a well defined Quality Management System is needed. As guide and instrument, VDAB-management chose for the ISO 9000 series, as a standard that controls (control: to know what happens, know what to do, 'mastering') of the management of an organization can be established by having a documented policy and supporting procedural instructions which define responsibilities and actions of everyone whose work impacts of the service provided."

For the purposes of implementation in the continuing training sector, it was initially necessary "to define the customer and all parties who are affected by the service being provided: the students ..., the company who pays for the training ..., the 'users' of the trained students ..."

In a *quality system*, responsibilities for the planning, implementation and follow-up of the courses and the competencies of the various departments were defined. The form and informatory content of training products was defined and structured ("Contract Review"). Quality control of the holding of the course required not the definition of instructional principles and course contents but the definition of procedural rules for selecting lecturers, expert reviews of the curricula and the modularization of the content. Quality problems can be traced through the written documentation by the trainer of all successful stages in the participants' learning ("Traceability"). In every course, the participants' entry qualifications and, ultimately, results of learning are recorded ("Inspection and Testing"). All these records are discussed with the participants and the consequences ("remedy, next step, corrective action if the result is not successful") are discussed jointly with them.

The quality programme under EN ISO 9000 was designed with the participation of working parties of lecturers: these working parties produced course descriptions and evaluation sheets. It was regarded as an important factor behind the QM system that the lecturers which were to apply it had been involved in its planning. The first audits took place around November 1994; 80% of the lecturers were prepared for the external initial audit at that time.

VDAB regards it as an advantage of EN ISO certification of continuing training services that the quality policy is recorded and supported by all participants, not in a non-binding form ("pep talk") but in terms of precise and quantifiable categories. In addition, the attention of the management is called to grey areas and unclear responsibilities which may adversely affect quality. Because the EN ISO standard series 9000 defines procedures and not contents, adequate scope is left for the necessary creativity on the part of the training provider.

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Alignment with the EN ISO standard series offers the great advantage of being accepted in manufacturing industry and being *industry-compatible*. The ISO standard seems suitable for a number of reasons as an operational framework for quality assurance in in-house continuing training:

- It requires the *setting* of objectives for continuing training and indicators for its success, and so ensures the transparency of the continuing training for the parties involved. Possible conflicts of objectives between learning and working processes thus become apparent at an early stage and can be adjusted if necessary.

- It considers continuing training not as an isolated process but in the context of the firm's quality objectives. It thus meets the requirement linked to the internal integration of working and learning. The internal learning process is considered not in itself but as an element of production.

- Because of its Europe-wide validity, the EN ISO standard series can be a means for creating European compatibility of quality management procedures. It will not standardize such procedures or the content of quality criteria: but it ensures that discussion of quality assurance in continuing training uses the same terminology and classification, and the documentation requirements associated with its use improve the reproducibility of quality assurance measures for third parties.

At the same time, the *formalism* of the ISO standard is notable. "Certification under ISO is thus not a traditional form of quality assurance, in which the quality standards of continuing training or the end product have been assessed in terms of content. The standards on which ISO certification is based relate not to the contents of

the standards but exclusively to the method" [D]. Because it is open to any type of production and service, the standard is a mere methodology for quality management. It needs to know nothing about the specific product, and so does not require criteria, indicators or specific evaluation methods to be derived. However suitable it appears as a procedural standard for in-house and vocational continuing training, it is still no substitute for the preparation of content and methods for the evaluation of job-related continuing training.

For example, the Belgian study on *VDAB* reports: "The first challenge was to translate the requirements of ISO into the product: training. ISO standards and guidelines have been developed primarily for application in product organizations. The outcome of training is increasing knowledge, skills and attitudes" [BF6].

And the German study stresses the service provided by *CERTQUA*: "ISO certification requires a transfer of the ISO standards in question to the sector of vocational training. On the basis of standard DIN ISO 9001, CERTQUA has described the requirements to be met by a quality management system for training providers in 20 individual elements or modules. It has converted the standard of a quality management system, as it exists in DIN ISO 9001, for the sector of vocational training" [D3].

In the case of the *French* training provider *CESI-Normandie*, we have one of the documented EN ISO certifications of training facilities in France. In addition to the problems described, relating to the transfer of abstract standards into continuing training-related procedures (the evaluation problem, for example, has not yet been satisfactorily solved), this case also reveals an enormous effort in terms of cost and organization:

"The functioning of quality assurance
Time spent: From February 1991 (first thoughts) and 1 March 1993 (certification).
The time spent has been allocated as follows:
- 1 year for basic research into the application of the ISO standards,
- 2 years to establish quality assurance: definition of the quality system, installation of the system, 6 to 9 months for testing and adjustment.

Resources employed:
- The pilot committee, which replaces the steering committee and meets once a month,
- Detachment of a consultant for 1/3 time.
- Writing of procedures.

Costs: between 800 KF and 1.2 MFMF, depending on the method of calculation.

Daily operation requires a quality officer (1/4-time), and two internal auditors who are retired members of the Board of Management and each contribute 10 days' work per year (or about 500,000 FF)."

This is one of the main reasons why Joël Bonamy concludes that ISO certification will remain "elitist", if it is aimed at by only a few training providers in France [F].

For example, in the case of a complex service such as continuing vocational and in-house training, it is not clear what should be defined as a "customer requirement". Apart from the fact that it is often difficult to identify the client (is it the client enterprise as a whole, a personnel or training department, the individual participant or a public institution sponsoring the training, each of which may have different and conflicting quality expectations?), it can be said that the

clients themselves often have only vague notions of the objectives of training. In many of the documented cases, determining the objective is not a prerequisite but the first part of the interactive process between the training institution and the client ("training advisory service"). Such problems of adaptation also arise at other points of the application of EN ISO 9000.

In some case studies, therefore, another question also raised is whether the certification of in-house continuing training under the ISO standards does in fact actually contribute to improving the quality of the continuing training. The fact is that all case studies which refer to EN ISO 9000 mention it only as a framework, an organizational regulation of quality assurance. In no instance does it replace all the methods and instruments for evaluating the content of the training, which are referred to in many case studies. To this extent, the EN ISO certification will not put an end to the debate about quality assurance and quality management in training institutions; it is merely a *formal aid* to assuring quality in continuing training, whose definitions of content (quality criteria, indicators, evaluation procedures and instruments, optimization methods) have to be derived elsewhere.

In the case of *Spain*, the attitude of training providers to ISO certifications is reported to be largely one of rejection. However, Pedro Cordova asks critically whether this attitude does not arise from traditionalism on the part of the training providers, resulting wherever possible in interventionist action by the State, if the inadequate efficiency of the continuing training results in the wastage of resources in the long term.

"*Controversy regarding certification or standardization:* The practice of quality certification of training institutions has not become established in Spain as it has in the other countries. More than that, the possibility is contemplated with extreme reluctance, especially by the actual establishments concerned. Is the reason a more convenient situation for professional activity? Is there not too much risk, during this period, of seeing wasting of resources and frustration of expectations, and the degradation of the image of training? Is not this a serious diluted irresponsibility, given that, in view of the complexity and difficulty of mastering the aspects of measurement or verification schemes which relate to human resources within the organization, there has been neglect of the use of systematic approach methods which would make it possible to obtain sufficient information to validate and decide upon the effectiveness or relevance of the process or the options?" [E].

In addition, there are many other problems to be overcome, which will make it more difficult to introduce quality management methods under EN ISO 9000 in the case of training providers than it is in the case of manufacturing industry:

- Problems arise with the determination of the quality concept with regard to the factors of continuing training, with the carrying out of audits, and with the necessary definition of quality indicators for the service process. Continuing training is not a service provided in identically repetitive and clearly structured ways, but is subject to constant change in respect of its content and methods.

- Quality assurance procedures also affect surrounding areas: for example, in particular, questions of contract law and - within training departments and training providers - labour law have not yet been universally clarified as regards the certification of continuing training services.

- Many of the continuing training providers described in the case studies act for different clients with quite

different objectives, e.g. for governmental or public institutions (such as ministries, labour agencies and social institutions), for firms and for individuals. Certification of the provider as a whole rather than of individual training products presupposes possible problematical generalizations of their requirements. Interference with the in-house quality standards and regulations of some clients also have to be taken into account.

- EN ISO certification presupposes an increased expenditure for the training providers: in particular, convincing indicator and documentation systems have to be developed and maintained which improve the transparency and reproducibility of the service process. It remains unclear whether this increased expenditure can be successfully financed through market prices or budgets at a time when, in relative terms, training budgets at many European enterprises are declining.

- The certification offices accredited in Europe hitherto mainly operate in the industrial sector and have less experience with the certification of training providers. This creates the danger that the standards will be applied bureaucratically. A few years' experience is necessary to determine whether specialized certification offices for continuing training, such as have been set up in some Member States, will effectively help to improve the quality of the content of the continuing training provided by training departments and training providers, through particular specialized skills.

3. Quality assurance and structuring in the continuing training market

3.1 The continuing training market

In all nine Member States of the European Union from which case studies have been obtained, individuals and firms are supplied with continuing vocational training services primarily through *market relations*. In contrast to what happens with the basic vocational training system, which to varying extents features direct governmental regulation, in the sector of continuing vocational and in-house training the states confine themselves to setting framework conditions, intervene through institutions of their own which are concerned with vocational training, and exert a controlling effect on the market as a result of their importance as customers in the continuing training market.

The principle of the open market for vocational or in-house continuing training is - depending on objectives in terms of economic and training policy, economic and social framework conditions and preconditions on the side of basic vocational training - implemented in different ways and with different results in the nine states, but can be said to be a fundamental principle, in contrast to the case of basic vocational training.

"In Greece there has up to now been established an uniform formalized system of continuing vocational training. ... A complex network of public and private agencies has been set up offering vocational training to employed and unemployed persons that is being developed side by side but clearly taken apart from the formal vocational training system. ... In this context as no approval or recognition of the State is required by the providers the continuing vocational training market is open and is characterized by the multiplicity and diversity of suppliers and supply and by the subsidiary role of the State. Among the continuing vocational training providers are included:

- Public authorities and State controlled organizations
- Universities and educational institutions

- Professional associations and chambers
- Organizations set up by employers' and employees' unions
- Regional and Local authorities
- Private human resources development and training agencies" [GR].

"Training provision in *Ireland* can be divided in three distinct categories:
- Initial and continuing training for the unemployed
- Training for the re-integration of the socially excluded
- Training for the employed in industry

The first two categories are catered for by state funded training centres and community based workshops and by externally contracted private trainers. ... Training for the employed is provided by a variety of in-house trainers, part time and night-courses in state operated training and education providers, private training companies and consultants working on and off the job. [IRL].

"The sector of continuing vocational training in the *Federal Republic [of Germany]* is clearly separate from that of basic training. This is expressed both in the statutory regulations regarding continuing training and in many continuing training product ranges, most of which require qualifications to have been obtained in basic training. The continuing training 'system' has, since the Second World War, been structured quite differently in the Federal Republic from basic vocational training. In some sectors of continuing vocational training, especially in the last 10 to 15 years, a supplier structure has developed which bears the stamp of a market economy. In the course of history, the variety of the continuing vocational training system has given rise to different forms of quality assurance which are only valid and justified for the part-sector in question. ... What this means for the structure of continuing vocational training is the following: in the Federal Republic of Germany, continuing vocational training is relatively unregulated by comparison with basic vocational training, which is regulated by the social partners and the State. ... Continuing vocational training is therefore non-uniform from the structural standpoint, consisting of various segments in which governmental responsibilities and training market combine in different ways. ... In the Federal Republic, continuing vocational training is clearly separate from the basic training system. ... The market economy sector of continuing vocational training in the Federal Republic is characterized by the 'pluralism' of the various suppliers. ... This competition [includes] the following suppliers: enterprises (private industry, public service), governmental, municipal and public law providers (e.g. universities, adult education centres, chambers), employers and unions (e.g. industrial training systems, the continuing vocational training system of the DGB [German Trade Union Federation], training system of the DAG [German Salaried Staff Union]), vocational associations, professional associations (e.g. Association of German Engineers, Association of Industrial Economists, Federal Federation of Industrial Foremen's Associations), private commercial/non-profit-making training providers" [D].

The report on *France* states: "Uncertainty as to quality can be traced back to the origins of the continuing training system which was established under the Law of 16 July 1971. That law made it obligatory for enterprises to participate in the financing of vocational training by allocating a given percentage of the wage bill to it.

At the time the law was in preparation it had been realized that proposing to set up a vast training market, funded by an obligatory contribution from employers whereas operators were relatively few in number, would necessarily generate tensions. In fact, the need to prompt additional operators to embark on this

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activity, in the knowledge that to be compulsory employer participation would have had to rise from 0.8% to 2% of the total wage bill between 1972 and 1976, was to result in quantity being given priority, as it were, over a more harmonious development of training activity. It was for this reason that bodies wishing to operate in the training market were subjected to only a minimum of rules for the carrying out of their activities. These rules are confined to registering their intention to enter the market (declaration of existence) and an a posteriori description of the activities they have carried out (instructional and financial stock-take).

Today, the available vocational training service is characterized by being distributed or fragmented over a great many training bodies. In fact, the Law of 1971 instituted the right of any legal or natural person to carry out this activity. This opening-up of the market explains why most of the participants merely diversified into it, their main activity not being training. Only 15% of the bodies concerned earn the majority of their turnover from vocational training" [F].

If the continuing training market is divided into segments, classified by the respective clients, we find - disregarding national peculiarities for the moment - characteristic forms of market relationships and governmental intervention:

- *Continuing vocational training for firms*

  In-house continuing training takes place in all states reported in the case studies, largely free of direct governmental or public interference. It is carried out in the context of *private-law contractual relationships* between training providers and firms, or in the context of the internal division of work by training departments. In some Member States, statutory regulations ensure a certain minimum of in-house training [E, F, GR, P], or in-house continuing training is publicly sponsored in certain regions and sectors or for small and medium-sized enterprises.

- *Continuing vocational training for private, individual customers*

  Continuing training measures for private customers who want to maintain or improve their professional opportunities are also agreed in the form of service

contracts with training providers. In the continuing training market, providers use advertising media to recruit potential private customers for training. Governmental regulations in this sector - where they exist - are mainly concerned with consumer protection. In some states, employees have a statutory right to continuing training, intended to preserve their capacity for work [E, F, P].

- *Continuing vocational training in the context of social and labour market policy*

  The case studies, and supplementary material from CEDEFOP, reveal that continuing vocational training is increasingly being used as an instrument of social, regional and labour market policy. All nine states therefore have authorities and publicly controlled institutions which initiate, promote and control continuing vocational training to serve the interests of these policies. In some cases, these institutions are not themselves involved in supplying training on the continuing training market, but act as customers to those that are. The free market concept is thus retained in principle, but considerably affected by sponsorship and subsidies: simply as a result of the wide extent of public demand, relative to the market relationship between individuals, the continuing training market is structured and its content oriented in a specific way.

Quality assurance in continuing training regularly has effects on market mechanisms. However, only intervention in accordance with market principles can ensure that ...

- quality assurance systems on the independent responsibility of those involved - as participants or suppliers - in continuing training become established instead of state-regulated quality control systems;

- questions of quality assurance in continuing training are not confused with questions of the certification of continuing training or new market structure models;

- the quality criteria which individuals and firms expect continuing vocational training to meet are reflected in quality yardsticks with appropriate content;

- and that the wide variety of activities pursued by training providers and in-house training departments are not curtailed by external quality yardsticks, and that the rapid reactions and flexibility of the continuing training system are retained. Experience suggests that the state-planned supply of training requires long periods of preparation, which would not be adequate to meet the requirements expected of continuing vocational and in-house training, which has to keep pace with a very rapid technological and organizational change.

3.2 Quality assurance in the continuing training market

3.2.1 Quality criteria

In line with the wide variety of participants and interests to be found in the continuing training market, the criteria and instruments of quality assurance in continuing vocational training are more differentiated than at the level of the individual firm or provider.

In the case studies alone, therefore, the following *general* objectives of continuing vocational training are mentioned, and quality assurance in continuing training must relate to these:

- Appropriate provision of continuing training services to industry and individuals

- Support for technological development

- Ensuring the transparency of the continuing training market and the comparability of available continuing training services; consumer protection

- Flexibility of the continuing training market

- Ensuring the vocational integration of particular target groups (the unemployed, the handicapped, those threatened with exclusion) by continuing vocational training

- Support for regional development through continuing vocational training

The list could be extended - but the disparity even between these objectives shows that quality criteria in continuing training must be able to be derived from quite different and in some cases conflicting yardsticks.

In contrast to in-house continuing training, where there is a clear emphasis in the quality assessment on transferring what has been learnt into practical application, the case studies therefore say little about the derivation of quality criteria in continuing training at the macro-level. Where such criteria are listed, the case studies relate to public training institutions or those supported by associations.

3.2.2 Quality assurance mechanisms in the continuing training market

If we consider the sector of the continuing training

market which is relevant for enterprises, a distinction can be made between sources of quality assurance. Quality can be ensured by ...

- market mechanisms
- measures to improve market transparency
- self-monitoring by training providers
- certification of recognized final qualifications
- contractual regulations and specifications
- multi-provider standards
- direct and indirect national and/or European support
- direct and indirect national and/or European legislative intervention

3.2.2.1 Quality assurance as a result of market mechanisms

All the case studies report the existence of numerous suppliers and of competition in the continuing training market. The suppliers are independent training providers, professional associations, regional or sectoral industrial associations, union training providers, chamber training providers, subsidized or governmental providers and training departments of large enterprises.

Apart from price, the quality of the training measures is an essential means for market success. In some case studies [D, GR, UK], it is explicitly assumed that an adequate, flexible and high-quality supply of continuing training services to individuals and firms takes place as

a result of market mechanisms. The marketing of training has a reciprocal effect on the quality of the training measures.

> The German case study, for example, reads: "The system concept of the nineteen eighties featured the objective of an open continuing training market. The market was expected to supply the existing demand for high-quality products. In this concept, governmental activities were subject to the principle of subsidiarity, according to which action by governments is only justified if the tasks in question cannot be achieved by private forces and the financial resources of those concerned (e.g. assistance to problem groups under labour market policy). In this phase, the enterprises, too, become important as training providers. ... In contrast to other areas of the training system, continuing vocational training is particularly characterized by the fact that it is significantly influenced by the organization of the market economy. According to the public policy objective of an open continuing training market, various suppliers of continuing training services enter the market (supplier pluralism). As compared with other sectors of training, the statutory rules and standards in continuing vocational training are less comprehensive. The state imposes framework conditions for continuing vocational training, which have to be complied with by those operating in the continuing training market. However, it also takes action on the basis of subsidiarity, when certain continuing training functions cannot be supplied by private suppliers" [D].
>
> "The UK Government does not feel that it is the best placed to determine what skills are needed within the training market. It feels that business and individuals are able to forecast their own emerging skill needs and decide how these should be met. ... The primary role of the UK Government is to ensure that the training market has the capacity to identify and adapt to demographic, technological and economic change. ... Its role is to create the right climate in which businesses may flourish" [UK].

On the other hand, some case studies point out that, in the training sector, some restrictions on a functioning market mechanism have to be accepted and quality assurance thus does not automatically result from competition between the participants in the market.

Included among these functional defects in the continuing training market are:

- *Imbalances in the supplier structure*: training providers subsidized by government or associations have an impact on private providers. Market structures are lacking.

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"Ultimately however the continuing vocational training market is being inadequately and asymmetrically covered in many matters due mainly to the lack of specific offer and demand structures" [GR].

- Quality in continuing training is brought about in a *relational process* between participants and the training facility - the participant contributes his particular existing qualifications; to this extent, quality cannot be positively defined merely as a property of the provider's services. For many of the training institutions described in the case studies, then, "customer orientation" is regarded as the dominant guideline of their quality assurance - but at the same time this guideline is only methodological and needs to be supplemented specifically for each case.

In the *French* study, the following comment is made on the problem of market transparency:

"The question of quality in vocational training has become steadily more pronounced. The imposition of minimal controlling rules has not really made it possible to ensure the transparency of a market which is often regarded as opaque even by those who are active in it. This uncertainty relates not to the training itself or its usefulness, but to its production - in other words to the training bodies which supply it and to their relations with the trainees. By the Law of 1990, the legislator organizes the relation between the training body and the trainees and lays the groundwork for a "consumer right" relating, in particular, to the teaching contract.

In order to characterize the current situation affecting the case studies, a brief account will be given below of the changes in the position of the main participants (the enterprises as customers for training; the state as the regulator of the market; and the training bodies as the suppliers of training services) relative to the question of quality and the various routes they have taken in order to be able to guarantee the quality of the training which they produce or consume. To conclude this first section, an effort will be made to summarize the contributions made by the case studies to the factors extending the quality approaches" [F].

- *Non-transparency of the continuing training services and the continuing training market as a whole*: the quality of continuing training services is more difficult to assess than that of material products or other, less complex services. In addition, customers have to evaluate the quality ex ante with reference to informa-

tion documents and consultancy discussions.

The *German* study reports: "As the organized continuing training market, based on a market economy, has expanded in recent years, purchasers in this sub-segment of continuing vocational training have been faced with new uncertainties and risks regarding the quality of the product. This problem has resulted in controversy about quality assurance concepts in continuing vocational training. ... The wide variety of the continuing training available has resulted in a lack of transparency for the consumer of continuing training" [D].

And the *Spanish* expert Pedro Cordova has this to say: "But the need to illuminate and clarify the training market is even more urgent. During recent years, a very copious supply of training has come into existence in Spain, often accompanied by very aggressive marketing, which makes it difficult to choose between the most appropriate programmes or services. In addition, the implementation of the National Continuing Training Agreement, with substantial resources devoted to financing training programmes, has caused the appearance of a large number of small training and consultancy institutions or enterprises which want to share in the distribution of these funds. Making decisions on the purchase of training services or programmes proves complex and difficult, especially for those enterprises or institutions which have, to a substantial extent, professionalized the in-house training function or who lack a training organization equipped with adequate methodologies and criteria" [E].

- Customers of continuing training - both individuals and enterprises - are often *not competent customers*: they lack the criteria to assess their need for continuing training services and to evaluate them. Uncertainties as to quality may be assumed, especially in the case of less pre-trained and independent individual customers and in the case of smaller and medium-sized enterprises.

Reference has been made in [Chapter 2] to a two-sided development in the market relations between enterprises and training providers:

- On the one hand, providers of training to large firms are increasingly converted from the start - in the large firm's planning and training departments - to mere suppliers of precisely defined continuing training services. In such cases, the training provider is now hardly required to provide independent services of needs assessment, training planning and success evaluation.

- On the other hand, new forms of cooperation are developing between training providers and small and medium-sized enterprises, in which the training provider offers his own services to make good the small or medium-sized enterprise's deficiencies in training organization, vocational training and evaluation resources, and these services provide backup during the implementation of training measures.

As regards the development of market structures, the first alternative initially appears to pose no problems: defined and hence marketable services are offered and bought. The question must arise, however, of whether the separation of training providers from the identification of demand and evaluation of measures may not impair the quality of the continuing training service in the long term. At present, the training providers find out about the results of need analyses and evaluations largely through market relations alone - in other words, through the fact that their seminar proposals are accepted or certain modifications are required. But quality assurance in the market for continuing training for firms requires that the separation between suppliers and customers is partially overcome: in so far as continuing training is organized as a service in a free continuing training market, those who provide it act outside the sphere of working activities. Criteria of curriculum design and teaching concepts, and implementation, are thus not produced by direct access but are transmitted. The process of quality assurance, in other words the relationship of continuing training work to the working world, would therefore have to take place in a separate, continuous feedback process. Quality assurance methods for continuing training in large enterprises have to be measured against whether they encourage this feedback to the training provider. Conversely, quality assurance methods within the institution that provides the training not only need to be implemented internally but must be so designed as to be capable of reaching out to the custo-

mer.

In the relationship between training providers and SMEs there are more fundamental problems: the cooperation between the provider's personnel and the SME during the analysis of needs, the planning of training and, after the implementation of training measures, the evaluation of the training makes it difficult to separate the contributions of firm and provider. The services of the training provider, however, have to be economically quantified so that they can be financed via the market. In addition, the willingness of SMEs to pay extra for adaptation to needs and quality assurance measures in continuing training is not generally very great; such services are regarded, if not as actually superfluous, at least as inexpensive and a matter of course. For SMEs, the focus is on the *implementation* of the training measures. Training providers who are unwilling to renounce the evaluation of their methods completely usually resort, in this situation, to minimalization of the evaluation (for example on participant questionnaires) or cost their expenditure into the market price of the courses. This, however, makes marketing the training difficult for providers who not only want to sell standard seminars but also intend to provide back-up measures in the evaluation of needs and results: their programmes are more costly. To this extent, functional quality assurance in continuing training services for SMEs, financed through the market, presupposes a new awareness of training on the part of the enterprise.

3.2.2.2 Quality assurance as a result of measures to improve market transparency

The lack of transparency regarding the available continuing training services and the fact that many training customers are under-informed have meant that *information*

and advisory facilities have become an essential means of quality assurance in the continuing training market.

All the case studies report on advisory services offered by the training institutions themselves to potential participants - but the boundary between those interested in a sale and those interested in advice is often hard to determine. There are also advisory centres at regional level, or run by professional or industrial associations or by government institutions. Written "check lists" and introductions to provide information to customers for training are supplementary to the work of the advisory centres. Cross-boundary information centres have come into being - largely through major public training institutions (GR: *OAED*, IR: *FAS*, DE: *Federal Institute for Labour* E: *INEM*, P: *IEFP*), but in some cases at the initiative of industrial associations and chambers - in the form of continuing training databases which allow a multi-provider comparison of basic data on continuing training services. Quality evaluations, however, are rarely included in the databases because of problems with definition and legal difficulties.

The private Spanish service provider DIRFO (EG) can be regarded as a special case, providing its customers (enterprises and private individuals) not only with a market survey of available training services but also with appropriate quality assessments.

"Since its initial conception in 1989, DIRFO has offered two services:

- *The Information Service:* Its purpose is to provide customers with full and up-to-date information on the training and human resources consulting programmes and services available on the Spanish market. This information is regularly transmitted through publications and information media, and when responding to consultations about all types of programme, courses, facilities, etc.

- *The Quality Service:* Its purpose is to consult customers and provide them with valid references on the quality of the training service mentioned.

During the description of the DIRFO model, the initial training quality system and its evolution into the present system, oriented towards quality and effectiveness of training, will be presented" [E].

In some cases, the provision of advice and information to customers is also adversely affected by the absence of

the necessary base, in the form of a general "lack of valid and reliable statistics" [GR] about continuing vocational training.

The German case study lists the following examples for the improvement of the transparency of continuing vocational training: "Apart from the home study sector, there is no consumer protection body available to the continuing training consumer, because conventional consumer protection institutions are not generally concerned with the quality of continuing vocational training. One exception is *STIFTUNG WARENTEST*, initiated and sponsored by the government, which currently undertakes a quality study of the services offered by continuing training providers on behalf of the Federal Ministry for Education, Science, Research and Technology (BMBWFT). Smaller studies undertaken by Stiftung Warentest are already available on the quality of EDP courses.

"The 'quality check list on continuing vocational training', presented by the *Federal Institute for Vocational Training* (BIBB) in 1992, can also be regarded as an additional government activity in the interests of consumer protection. The quality criteria laid down in the check list have been accepted into many quality standards which, for example, have been formulated by various independent training providers."
[Explanatory note: The BIBB was founded in 1970 on the basis of the German Vocational Training Act. The object of the BIBB is to develop the bases for basic and continuing training in all vocational sectors and to modernize and improve vocational training. The BIBB is also active in the fields of advising arrangers of home study courses and providing information to the public.] [D.]

3.2.2.3 Self-monitoring by the training providers

Some case studies refer to concepts of self-monitoring of quality by training providers or in-house training departments. "Self-monitoring" in this context can be understood as meaning that training institutions compile and publish quality statutes on a voluntary basis and measure their activities against them. In order to ensure and demonstrate greater independence of the quality yardsticks, they are in many cases sponsored not by the individual training institutions as such but by regional or sectoral associations of training providers or enterprises. Verification of compliance with the quality statutes is, accordingly, the responsibility either of the individual training institution or of the association of training providers. In individual cases, industry associations or technical advisory councils take over this role.

Quality seals are often awarded as external confirmation that the self-imposed standards are being complied with.

An example of self-monitoring by training providers is given in the German *case study*:

The association "*Weiterbildung Hamburg e.V.*" is a regional of training providers who undertake to meet certain quality criteria and award a quality seal to certify that this has been done. The association currently comprises 130 continuing training facilities, representing about two-thirds of the capacity of the publicly accessible continuing vocational training in the Hamburg region.

Compliance with quality standards developed within the association is a pre-requisite for membership. These standards relate to the personnel and equipment provided for the courses, participant-related quality features (such as the transparency of the service offered, the availability of training consultancy and the contractual arrangements for the participants), and special criteria for training measures relating to final qualifications. The association uses a questionnaire to verify that its members are complying with the quality standard. A committee of assessors can verify that the standards are actually being observed.

The quality seal awarded by the association since 1 January 1994 seems, on the evidence so far, to be an important criterion for both private customers and enterprises in selecting training providers.

The *British* initiative "*Investors in People*" can be regarded as a concept relating to self-monitoring in internal continuing training: "The Investors in People National Standard is a key initiative to encourage employers to invest effectively in the skills needed for business success. The standard developed by business for business and supported by the UK Government is promoted nationally by Investors in People UK, a business led body. ... Participation in Investors in People is voluntary. To be awarded the Investors in People Standard an employer must:

- make a public commitment from the top of the organization to develop all employees to achieve the organization's business objectives;
- regularly review the training and development needs of all employees;
- take action to train and develop employees, when they are recruited and throughout their employment; and
- evaluate the investment in training and development to assess achievement and improve future effectiveness.

The systems that employers need to have in place to demonstrate to an independent qualified assessor that they meet the criteria of the Investor in People Standard are for them to determine. The award is not made on a permanent basis. Every three years a company must undergo reassessment to ascertain whether it has maintained sufficiently high standards.

By end of August 1994 there were over 1000 organizations in Britain recognized as an Investor in People, employing over 500,000 people. At the same time over 9,700 employers were formally committed to achieving this standard. ...

A key element in the Investor in People Standard is the measurement of the effectiveness of investment made in training. Research has shown that employers who are recognized as an Investor in People use many different ways to measure

the effectiveness and quality of training. The most rigorous methods involve a formal evaluation system, which may include individual elements such as formal feedback on the quality of training; tests of knowledge and pre- and post-training performance measurement and/or the attainment by an individual of a qualification or recognized company standard" [UK].

The *British case study* views the *"Industrial Training Organizations"* as a sectoral approach to quality assurance on the training provider's responsibility: "A network of over 120 employer led, Industry Training Organizations (ITOs) which cover industrial sectors employing around 85% of the workforce. ITOs monitor future skill requirements and training needs in their sector, develop and promote occupational standards and encourage employers in their sectors to increase their training efforts" [UK].

Another, *Irish* organization concerned with questions of quality in continuing training is the *IITD*: "The Irish Institute of Training and Development is a voluntary membership body that sees its mission as the provider of growth for those involved in training and development and by so doing, to become the Irish voice for the development of people both at organizational and individual level in Ireland. ... The Institute has 1120 members currently of which 115 are student members. The institute provides: a professional body for consultants and trainers in Ireland, it aims to develop and monitor professional standards for training, to provide regional and national fora for discussion and policy making in the human resource development area, and to set standards for professional conduct for the profession" [IRL].

This form of quality assurance, using standards and quality seals imposed by the training providers themselves, is by no means such a convenient solution for the providers as might at first be thought. After all, the public presentation of quality standards with a contractual effect does create a transparency which provides clients and participants in the continuing training with the possibility of evaluating continuing training services in advance and verifying them afterwards. However, such self-imposed standards generally fail to have a binding effect on all providers; they thus fail to improve the comparability of continuing training providers as far as their customers are concerned. In addition, apart from fundamental declarations of intent, they generally lay down quality criteria which are more external because they are designed to be easy to verify. In addition, quality catalogues, quality seals, etc., are difficult to operationalize and so often fail to conform to the objects of the particular measures. Their market acceptance will be low when they serve as a mere marketing instrument in the competition between the

providers of continuing training.

The category of "self-monitoring" among training providers can also be said to include *quality prizes*, for which enterprises and training providers can compete if their continuing training meets certain quality criteria which are regarded as exemplary. These quality prizes are awarded in a number of states by government departments, industry associations or quality certification bodies.

Quality prizes mentioned in the case studies include the following:

United Kingdom: "In February 1994 the *UK Quality Award*, based on the European Quality Model, was launched by the British Quality Foundation with the support of Government. All companies applying for the UK Quality Award will need to show how the training and the development of employees is undertaken and implemented. Companies will also need to demonstrate how the effectiveness of training is measured" [UK].

In *Ireland* a *National Training Award* is awarded: "The National Training Awards are designed to encourage training excellence and to demonstrate the link between training investment and improved business performance. Each FAS [the Training and Employment Authority] region selects a training award winner from its grant applications. ... The national award winners are selected from the regional winners by an independent jury representing the social partners. This competition promotes training and best practice in industry across the regions and in all size of companies" [IRL].

3.2.2.4 Quality assurance as a result of certification of recognized trial qualifications

According to all the case studies, training providers and in-house training departments in the nine Member States participating in the project are free to plan and implement training measures which offer no recognized final qualifications - in other words without reference to formal vocational qualifications under the basic vocational training system or to qualifications recognized by governments or by professional and industrial associations. The flexibility of the continuing training market - the variety of the services it offers and its ability to react rapidly to changing requirements - is based on

that freedom and represents an important quality feature of the available continuing training. In fact, the majority of continuing vocational training in many Member States is certified, if at all, merely by certificates awarded by the providers themselves.[7]

On the other hand many employed people can be seen to have an interest in seeing successful qualifications certified on a multi-enterprise basis in order to sustain or improve their attractiveness in the job market.

In so far as continuing training institutions provide preparation for recognized vocational qualifications, or themselves provide training and certification based on such qualifications, it is possible to talk about indirect quality control, the index being the success of the participants in passing the tests. The quality requirements associated with external test standards primarily take effect in the result of training measures when the participants are examined. In some cases, however, they also relate to the preparation for tests provided by courses (for example through regulations governing certain numbers of hours worked, practicals, the qualifications of the continuing training personnel or existing qualifications among the participants).

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[7] In this connection, "certification" means confirmation that recognized final vocational tests have been successfully passed and not application of the EN ISO certification to training institutions, which was discussed earlier.

In the *United Kingdom*, an increasing number of further training providers and in-house training departments are referring to a descriptive standardization of vocational qualifications, the NVQs (England and Wales) and SVQs (Scotland). They represent ...

"a national framework of qualifications to meet the needs of industry and to allow the individual to obtain qualifications based on nationally accepted standards of competence which are set by employers. In England and Wales, the framework is compiled by the National Council for Vocational Qualifications which accredits the National Vocational Qualifications. In Scotland this task is the responsibility of SCORVEC which accredits Scottish Vocational Qualifications. ...

National Vocational Qualifications (NVQs) are based on occupational standards of competence. The competencies required in employment are defined by Lead Bodies. Lead Bodies comprise representatives of employment interest (employers and employees), education and training providers and relevant professional groups. Some ITOs also fulfil this Lead Body role. ...

Occupational standards describe the level of skill and knowledge required to be able to perform a job effectively at work. Lead Bodies work with nationally recognized Awarding Bodies in the design of proposed NVQs. All proposed qualifications are then submitted to the National Council for Vocational Qualifications (NCVQ) for accreditation of award. Accreditation may be granted for a maximum of five years after which re-accreditation must be sought again. ...

NCVQ also monitors the quality of the qualifications by laying down criteria which Awarding Bodies must meet. Also through monitoring of contracts agreed with the Awarding Body for each accredited Qualification" [UK].

With regard to qualifications in continuing vocational training in *Germany* "as in basic vocational training and in other parts of the training system (such as schools and universities) there are again sectors which are regulated and standardized by the state". Two sub-sectors can be distinguished: "On the one hand there are training courses and qualifications gained under the academic continuing training system on the basis of Land laws; this refers especially to technical colleges, post-secondary technical colleges, universities and academies. The technical colleges are of central importance here. On the other hand there are further training arrangements covered by the Vocational Training Act (BBiG) and the Crafts Order (HwO). This non-academic continuing vocational training is carried out by firms and outside training providers" [D].

3.2.2.5 Quality assurance as a result of contractual regulations and specifications

In documenting quality assurance measures, a number of case studies also deal with questions of the contractual relationship between the participant or client and the provider of the continuing training. The basic concept is that the contractual arrangements should make it possible to adapt continuing training services to special or

changing needs, and that certain quality features in continuing training should be made binding by contract.

In some states, collective agreements (such as those between employers and employees) also include regulations governing in-house continuing training, which also touch upon quality matters in the broadest sense.

In the Articles of Association of "Weiterbildung Hamburg e.V.", certain regulations are laid down for contracts with participants, covering for example rights of withdrawal, procedures for giving notice, payment arrangements, data protection and evidence of participation [D2].

At *VDAB*, Belgium, there are precise regulations as to the binding elements which an offer of a continuing training programme must include.

"An offer of any training programme should contain at least following elements:

1. Name of the programme, as a general description of the content.
2. Objective: in terms of what one can do after training.
3. Content divided in units.
4. Duration
5. Organization (full days, half-time, all days of the week, weekend, evening)
6. Conditions of entry (what is necessary: basic knowledge or experience, what course can be followed as preparation)
7. Outcome: function, application in the job
8. Possible follow through to other training courses
9. Related programmes
10. Location
11. Cost
12. How to attend

The contract for a training course can be made in different steps and in several ways:

- The company reacts on the offer and places an offer, the training institute confirms by a tender, that is to be confirmed by the company
- The training institute makes a tender and the customer confirms.
- The contract between individuals and the training institute is made by enrolment and acceptance by the training institute.
- The students sent by a company make a new contract by accepting the training plan presented by the trainer" [BF6].

In many cases of cooperation between firms and training providers in France, specifications as to the quality of the service become an integral part of the contract. In the case described, *Renault France* prepared a specification for the external buying-in of continuing training, in which the requirement for and verification of the quality of the provider's continuing training service is codified.

Such specifications are also an integral part of the contract in the *Luxembourg* cases of *Prolingua* and *CFPC*. In many other cases of internal quality assurance in continuing training, the formulation of strict quality requirements for the buying-in of external training measures is a by-product of the firm's own activities.

3.2.2.6 Quality assurance as a result of multi-provider standards

Standardization of those elements of continuing training which are not subject to the influence of individual training institutions or clients is treated in all the case studies as an essential means for determining criteria and ensuring the reproducibility of quality assurance measures in continuing vocational training.

Various forms of such standardizations are mentioned in the case studies:

- Quality standards in continuing training which relate to particular sectors

- Quality standards which are derived from fixed vocational profiles and/or test systems [cf. Section 3.2.2].

- National or European standardizations of quality in vocational training

- National or European standardizations on the setting-up of quality management systems [cf. Chapter E].

Among others, the Greek case study refers to the problematical relationship between fixed standards and the suitability of the continuing training service to meet the customer's needs: "An actual unfeasibility in establishing universal quality standards and generally applicable quality assurance procedures that may to be functional and effective in any type and form of training activity. On the one hand training quality standards and assurance procedures have to be uniform and independent

from any specific training agency, type, form, content or setting (national standards or generally acknowledged standards like ISO 9000) and on the other hand they have to be applicable and adaptable to each one individual structure and activity of the respective training agencies, types, forms, contents and settings (training institutions or companies, on-the-job or off-the-job training, public or private funded training)" [GR].

In the sometimes heated controversy regarding general quality standards in continuing training, it is apparent that standardizations are entirely linked to particular interests: not only is their content derived from specific views of quality criteria which are to be applied, but their implementation affects the economic interests of individuals, providers and firms.

Thus, the German case study reports in detail on the controversy regarding CERTQUA as a certifying organization for training providers under EN ISO 9000: "The criticism of CERTQUA is directed at the question of the independance of the company, which is regarded in many quarters as a problem. From the union side, the criticism is made that, through CERTQUA, the DIHT [the German Industrial and Trade Association, an organization of the Chambers of Industry and Commerce in Germany; author's note], unconcerned by public debate and unrestricted by any control", is trying to establish itself "in key areas as a quasi-governmental substitute body". (...) Doubts are being expressed about the independance of CERTQUA because the founding members themselves allegedly operated as providers of continuing vocational training. The criticism expressed by the professional association of private providers of vocational training follows the same lines (...)." The case study comments on this as follows: "The debate as to the independence of CERTQUA, or lack of it, disregards the point of view that this form of certification says nothing about the content of the services offered by the providers of training but merely confirms that quality management is in operation. It may be possible to solve the problem of independence if certification bodies are established by other groups in society or if CERTQUA opens itself up to other groups. As private enterprise institutions, certification bodies as such cannot lay any claim to a monopoly; pluralism of suppliers of certification already exists today; with the flood of ISO certifications in the training sector, other suppliers - some of them already established in the industry - may offer themselves as providers of certification services for training providers."

The French study reports: "From 1990, initiatives by the profession are going to multiply as a response to the new demands of enterprises and public authorities. The concern was, for the profession, to monitor the suppliers and to provide verifiable undertakings which would make it possible to clarify the relations between the enterprises and the training bodies. These initiatives relate to:

- The adoption of the international standards of ISO 9000: about ten training bodies, either independent or attached to major production enterprises, have been certified.

- The drafting of national standards by AFNOR: work was undertaken on defining standards relating, in a first stage, to terminology, and to supply and demand in training, and in a second stage to service and the provision of training services. These standards are initially experimental and, when approved, become obligatory in the conclusion of public contracts.

- The creation of a professional office for qualifying training bodies. The principle is to grant a certificate to bodies which confirms ability to provide particular services (in accordance with a nomenclature of types of services), in view of its personnel, the durability of its structure and its customer references" [F].

Quality standards do not impose constraints on the flexibility and creativity of training providers when they are based on a framework which is independent of the providers of continuing training but allows scope for individual action by the various providers and are implemented on their own responsibility. Quality assurance by reference to multi-provider and provider-

independent standards, based on independent activities by the providers of continuing training, offers the advantage of an arrangement which can almost be objectivized but is not affected by state or private interests. Such standards improve the transparency of the continuing training market, provided that their criteria are published and compliance with them is monitored. They do however also result in provider selection. Smaller specialized training providers are often overstretched by the costs and requirements for certification to general standards. [cf. Section 3.3.2].

In *Ireland*, a standardization organization with voluntary membership, the *Irish Quality Association*, is presented as an example: "The Irish Quality Association is a membership organization; membership entitles members to an initial audit based on a completed questionnaire; if the questionnaire indicates a sufficient level of quality the IQA Approval Board will appoint an inspector to carry out an audit. The inspector will report the IQA Approval Board who will decide to award or not to award the Quality Mark" [IRL].

The *French* case of *CESI-Normandie* describes the attempt by a private training provider to introduce quality assurance systems based on certification under EN ISO 9000. CESI is in a complete minority in France in this respect. Apart from the high costs associated with the introduction of appropriate quality management, there were problems with translating the abstract standard into continuing training practice. The company expects this campaign to produce positive marketing effects in addition to internal rationalization.

In the case of *GRETA - Est Essonne*, the state training provider takes the French AFNOR standard as a guide for its quality assurance activities, without aiming at certification. This certification is not required by the customers and is too costly for the training provider.

3.2.2.7 Quality assurance in continuing training as a result of State conditions for assistance

A substantial part of continuing vocational training in all states reported on by the case studies receives assistance from government or local authority funds or is provided directly by government or local authority providers. Public assistance is provided not only for the continuing training of the unemployed, for purposes of vocational integration, or the qualification of specially

disadvantaged persons, but also some sectors of in-house continuing training. There can be a variety of reasons for in-house continuing training to be co-financed from European or national budget headings, such as ...

- improving the level of qualifications of the workforce, to the general benefit of the economy

- supporting the introduction of new technologies

- assisting regional development, especially in rural and underdeveloped regions

- promoting the vocational activity of women and the vocational integration of young people

- assisting the integration of special groups of people into working life, such as the handicapped and the socially disadvantaged.

Public assistance for in-house continuing training is regularly linked to the observance of conditions for assistance. It is apparent from some case studies that these conditions increasingly not only involve formal criteria but also take into account the *quality of the continuing training measures*.

Because of the large scale of the public assistance provided to continuing vocational training in many countries, it results in the authorities having an important *control function* in respect of the quality of services provided in the continuing training market. In some cases the public clients or sponsors take over existing national quality standards, while in others they draft their own lists of quality criteria in accordance with their particular objectives.

For example, the British Government has since September 1995 been assisting training facilities and enterprises which take on young people for training, under the programme entitled "*Accelerated Modern Apprenticeships*". It is a condition for receiving assistance that certain quality criteria should be observed.

"The UK Government, along with key partners, has taken every step to ensure that frameworks currently under design are based on a checklist of quality standards. Funding will not be available from Government for those frameworks which do not meet the criteria.

The common core criteria include such elements as:

- *Training* - Content and outcomes, the vocational sector will set the framework, making clear the skills, knowledge and understanding the apprentice is to develop. It is expected that training will take place, where possible, on employers' premises.

- *Assessment* - apprentices will be expected to gain at least NVQ level three.

- *Review* - ongoing review and evaluation of apprentice progress is an essential part of the programme.

- *Trainees* - Rights and Expectations, the training plan will be underpinned by a written pledge or agreement between the employer and the young person and underwritten by the TEC which demonstrates the commitment of all partners to training" [UK].

In *Germany*, continuing vocational training of the unemployed is regulated by the Employment Promotion Act [AFG]. Continuing training measures are contracted by the Federal Institute from suppliers in the continuing training market. Conditions attached to the provision of assistance to further training and retraining programmes, which also affect matters of the quality of the measures, also apply: "The starting point for defining the quality criteria of measures is § 33 AFG. The Federal Institute for Labour defines the 'type, scope, commencement and implementation of the measure after a due assessment of the circumstances, particular account being taken of ... the content and structure of the vocational training measure ...". ... In the case of the independent measures, the Federal Institute for Labour may, pursuant to § 34 AFG, refuse to provide assistance to the participant if the type and structure of the measure fail to comply with its quality requirements; in the case of contracted measures, quality yardsticks can also be prescribed in the contract with the contractor. ... The most important quality criterion in evaluating vocational training measures, as far as the Federal Institute for Labour or for the Employment Exchanges is concerned, is the effect on labour market policy. ... The quality criteria relating to training measures contain statements on: the objectives and designation of the course, future areas of vocational activity, target/addressee group, access requirements/ necessary previous knowledge, instruction periods (in theory and in multi-enterprise/in-house practice), teaching means, technical equipment available to the course, number of teaching personnel, qualifications (training and professional experience in adult education and vocational training) of the teaching personnel (trainers and lecturers), checks on learning and success, social instruction given to the participants (qualification of the personnel concerned), knowledge and skills after completion of the measure, course subdivision, framework teaching plan [D1].

INEM in *Spain* is developing detailed recognition procedures for training providers with which it collaborates as a government institute, and also for home study courses:

"As regards quality assurance in training, we have selected the system of approving and evaluating the centres, programmes and means for home study courses. This is a complex system, developed two years ago in order to improve quality levels within home study instruction. The process takes place in several stages:

- the establishment of quality standards.
- the approval of participating centres.
- planning.

The principles on which the system is based and the procedures adopted are as follows:

- adaptation to different types of user.
- permanent support in pupil/tutor, pupil/system and pupil/pupil interactions.
- the flexibility of the instructional material.
- quality as an organizational concept."

Only those training providers who successfully pass the INEM recognition procedures participate in the public continuing training programmes.

In *Greece*, the "Vocational Educational and Training Organization" (OEEK) was set up two years ago. This organization has developed a minimum catalogue of quality requirements for assisted training measures: "The Organization has adopted and applies a set of minimum quantity and quality standards and requirements pertaining to the material and training structures of the vocational training institutes ... it has prescribed the trainers' required qualifications and competencies and it has explicitly set up a scale of awarded training certifications and the corresponding prerequisites and acquiring procedures" [GR].

3.2.2.8 Quality assurance in continuing training as a result of governmental regulation of the continuing training market

Examples of direct governmental regulation of the quality of vocational or in-house continuing training by means of laws and decrees are documented only in isolated cases (such as in the German case study with the "Home Study Protection Act" [D4]). States increasingly adopt a subsidiary role: they confirm their intervention in the continuing training market to areas in which the market itself does not guarantee the supply (i.e., in particular, the sector of training problem groups in the labour market, consumer protection, etc.).

The influence exerted by the state on the quality of continuing training tends more often to take the form of the indirect effects of other action in the field of educational, social and economic policy. Factors which help to determine the quality of continuing training are:

- State or public recognition of certifications and associated quality requirements to be met by previous training measures [cf. Section 3.2.2.4]

- Requirements for the provision of state assistance to continuing training [cf. Section 3.2.2.7]

- Governmental training facilities whose effects also set quality yardsticks for the surrounding independent continuing training market

Thus the *Greek* case study reports on the *Manpower Employment Organization* [OAED]: "The existing continuing vocational training network is characterized by a striking diversity and a remarkable extent of the suppliers and the supply. ... A substantial portion however of the continuing vocational training activities is being offered by public or state controlled agencies having a rich tradition and a remarkable reputation in the vocational training and this fact does not allow any reliable assessment of the influences that the quality criteria and the standards have on the demand for continuing vocational training by the individuals and the companies" [GR1].

- Statutory requirements imposed on firms which require a particular scope and/or particular contents in basic and in-house continuing training

- Statutory regulations and requirements elsewhere (such as those relating to accident prevention, environmental protection, product safety, etc.), which give rise to requirements in respect of the quality of the in-house continuing training

- The statutory consumer protection regulations in the continuing training sector

In *Germany* the *Home Study Protection Act* (Fern USG) is typical of such regulations: "Home study occupies a special position within continuing training in the Federal Republic, from quality aspects, because the home study services are reviewed and licensed by government on the basis of quality standards. ... Under the Home Study Protection Act of 1976, all home study courses offered for valuable consideration - except those designed entirely for leisure and entertainment purposes - require a licence. Application also has to be made for a licence for important changes to courses already licensed. ... The decision whether to license a home study course is a matter for the 'Central Government Office for Home Study (ZFU)'. In the course of the licensing procedure, both the technical and the instructional quality of the teaching material are reviewed in the light of the objective of the course, as is the advertising and the form and content of the home study contract to be concluded between the course participant and the home study institute." The German study assumes that the objective of consumer protection is achieved by the statutory regulation - but it also assumes that it acts as an obstacle to innovative developments in home study in Germany: "In that [the Fern USG] has prescribed the structures which existed when it was first passed, it has greatly constricted the scope for adopting new creative approaches and taking risks in the development and implementation of courses. Home study thus appears to be a static, somewhat non-innovative area of training" [D4].

- The setting-up of public institutions and authorities to assure the quality of basic and continuing vocational training

Greece: "In this context an active State intervention is taking place today. A recently ratified Law on Regulations of Employment and Other Relevant Matters (Law 2224/1994) laid the foundation of a National Certification Centre of Continuing Vocational Training Structures under the auspices of the Ministry of Labour. The main intended duty of this Centre is the development of standards and the establishment of relevant procedures for the certification of the continuing vocational training providers' structures and for the quality assurance of their offers as well as the training and certification of trainers" [GR].

INEM in *Spain*, as a state authority which is also a training provider, is taking on the task of developing and implementing quality standards through the licensing of associated training providers.

- State aid to field trials, research and projects connected with questions of quality in continuing vocational training.

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For example, in the German case study: "An important innovative function in quality assurance in continuing vocational training is performed by the model experiments which have been conducted for 20 years and are assisted by the BIBB [Federal Institute for Vocational Training, Berlin; author's note]. A solution to a problem or an innovation in continuing vocational training is tried out in the real world of vocational training through model experiments. The course of the model experiment is scientifically monitored and evaluated. The intention is to achieve a rapid and wide-ranging further development of vocational training and continuing vocational training. In particular, model experiments are used to develop and test innovative solutions to both future and current problems. ... Observation of quality assurance in continuing vocational training also takes place through research projects awarded by the BIBB or BMBW [now the BMBWFT, Federal Ministry for Education, Science, Research and Technology; author's note]" [D].

In *France*, various forms of research and documentation work take place under state control which are intended to serve as a basis for improving quality in continuing training:

"As a regulatory body, the State, which has been said not to have intended to lay rules restricting access to the training market, initially endeavoured to improve the transparency of that market by providing operators with statistical and qualitative information on the main features of the market. Thus, over the last ten years, on the initiative of the Vocational Training Delegation (Ministry of Labour, Employment and Vocational Training), an important research study has been developed with a view to obtaining a better understanding of the "training market": statistical analysis of data relating to the activities of training bodies (from 1984), setting-up of study programmes dealing with the quality of training (1989) and changes to the training apparatus (1990), the launch of an in-depth survey of 400 bodies (1993) and the implementation of a prospective study of the sector of private training bodies, decided upon with the representative professional organization (1994)" [F].

Administratively binding quality yardsticks often have a rather unproductive standardizing effect. Their criteria are generally external, in the interests of ease of practical administration and verification. In many cases, therefore, there are fears that quality assurance could jeopardise flexibility and speed of reaction, and hence also quality elements in the continuing training system, as a result of arbitrary interference from above with continuing in-house and vocational training. On the other hand, the summaries of some case studies make the point that the *binding nature* of governmental regulations is not achieved by quality assurance systems instituted by training providers and firms on their own responsibility. In many of the Member States, this point is the subject of controversy at present in training policy.

Greece provides an example: "... an inherent contradiction in the movement for quality assurance in training, though not a matter exclusive to Greece, that is one that has arisen from any relevant debate and proposed action. On the one hand, the establishment of quality standards and quality control and assurance systems for training that have been developed on a legal basis is generally accepted as necessary and is being supported, and on the other hand, at the same time, the development and application by the training providers of internal mechanisms improving and assuring the quality of their training offers on a market-oriented basis are felt desirable and are being promoted".

The German case study refers to the same debate and makes the following recommendation in the matter of government intervention: "Because of the wide variety of the continuing vocational training system, however, the solution cannot be a standardized quality assurance system. Ensuring the quality of continuing vocational training calls for a wide range of approaches with different functions and emphases. General framework conditions for the development of uniform quality standards can be imposed via appropriate state regulations. In addition, however, adequate scope must be left for the individual development of quality standards by the training providers" [D].

3.3 Changes in the continuing training market as a result of quality assurance

The increasing demands made by customers and public aid institutions on quality assurance in vocational and in-house continuing training have repercussions on the continuing training market. In all the case studies, it becomes clear that the contours of the training landscape will be lastingly changed by the quality debate.

Two aspects need to be distinguished:

- First, in the *internal scene* of in-house training departments and in the case of training providers, it is foreseeable that the work will become *professionalized*. Continuing training services are provided in a formalized, controlled process, no longer on an unplanned and unstructured basis. This in turn places new demands on the vocational competencies of the protagonists in the continuing training process.

- Secondly, *relations between the demand and supply sides in continuing training* are changing. As a result of

quality assurance methods, interfaces are shifting and new forms of cooperation are occurring.

3.3.1 Professionalization of continuing vocational training

Efforts to introduce quality assurance into vocational and in-house continuing training are made at a wide variety of levels: educational, business management and administrative quality criteria rank side by side. They are taken into account with the use of a great many widely differing methods of evaluation, and converted into quality improvements in continuing training by means of a great many instruments. One way in which this heterogeneity becomes apparent is in the wide variations in the selection and weighting of the example cases in the national case studies.

However, all these heterogeneous methods and instruments of quality assurance have one thing in common: they result in *professionalization of continuing training in and for firms*. A new structure of the continuing training sector is being created not only by the special mode of action of individual instruments, such as those relating to the documentation, standardization and organization of continuing training, but simply by the thought given to quality matters which is associated with all the instruments.

This restructuring relates to a number of elements:

- Increasing *transparency* in vocational and in-house continuing training.

- *Intensification of cooperation* between continuing training institutions and their environment, meaning in particular their participants and clients, and finally:

- The *assistance given to internal continuing training* in the case of training providers and in-house training departments - extending to the point of developing independent vocational profiles and formalized careers in the continuing vocational training sector.

Hitherto, the openness of the continuing training market has also involved a low level of formalization of the education of those active in continuing training: the lecturers, the seminar leaders and the training managers. In all states reported on by the case studies, the routes of access for the continuing training personnel are considerably less regulated than those of their counterparts in the general academic education system. Accordingly, a multicoloured range of qualifications and professional experience is often found in the continuing training personnel - providing a basis not only for flexibility and creativity in this sector but also for regular quality problems. In the course of the greater efforts being made to introduce quality assurance measures into continuing training, changes can be expected in the qualifications of the continuing training personnel; formalization, standardization and the greater need for knowledge about the organizational overhead, all factors which are involved in quality assurance methods, may result in the strengthening of professional profiles in the continuing training sector and so, ultimately, in the long-term establishment of quality assurance in continuing training via professional qualifications.

In the *United Kingdom*, efforts are being made to professionalize the vocational training sector by incorporating typical qualifications for the continuing training personnel into the NVQ system: "Within the National Vocational Qualification framework standards have been established which are specific to functions of training and development, and line management. By defining the criteria for appropriate trainer competencies, the standards support the UK Government's strategy to ensure increased quality in training provision" [UK].

In *Ireland*, FAS has developed a system of qualification requirements for lecturers: "FAS operates a trainer approval system for contracted training and so screens the qualifications and resources of the private contracted trainers against the profile of training required by FAS regions. Unapproved trainers may not quote for training course provision outside their approval status. Trainer approval includes the listing of the following: directors and principles of the providers, names of any associated companies, track record, training experience and qualifications, types of courses and the regions in focus, resources available to the trainer, written references. ... Formal training of trainers in Ireland is increasing in demand and availability through Universities, Regional Technical Colleges, The Dublin Institute of Technology, The Irish Management Institute, and the IITD [Irish Institute of Training and Development]." [IRL]

As far as *France* is concerned, Joël Bonamy considers that the quality assurance movement in continuing training is having effects on the "professionalization" of the continuing trainers:

"One of the high stakes in the constitution of the training market is in the form of the identification of those active in it. It is significant that groups of training bodies are today giving thought to the analysis and strengthening of their collective identity. These ideas echo the development of qualification and certification, which are becoming established as tools of legibility.

With the development of these institutions, we are seeing a move away from a logic which centred professional legitimation on individuals towards a system in which structures are becoming the basis for professionalism and for confidence in contractor/client relations.

The knowledge and skills committed to this qualification, then, are not so much those of individuals (relative to the content of the training) as procedural knowledge defined on enterprise scale (quality manual, specification, etc.) and collectivity (ISO or AFNOR standards).

This tendency is becoming general today, and it can be said that the vocational training sector has been able to import logics of rationalization and professionalization which were taking effect in other sectors. However, this extension to training has not yet been fully effective: the theme of quality is relaunching old arguments on new bases, and the question arises of quality approaches suitable for the specific needs of training" [F].

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3.3.2 Changes in the market relations between those supplying and demanding training

Quality assurance in continuing training is understood, in all the case studies, as being primarily a strengthening of the customer orientation of training institutions. This view initially involves disregarding what specific requirements are associated with it, and whether the cases relate to external training providers or in-house training departments which "market" their products internally: in all cases, the phases prior to the actual training measure, the provision of advice and information to participants, the analysis of training needs and the marketing of training become particularly important.

This has repercussions on the planning of the training institutions' product ranges: first and foremost, they have to expand their advisory services. An advisory service has to cover not just needs analysis and planning of the continuing training measures, but also final evaluation services which can form the starting point for a new identification of needs. This involves the training provider in a new distribution of tasks among his employees: they have to take on functions as "training consultants", "training managers" or "training moderators"; the straightforward teaching and lecturing activities will increasingly be able to be supplied by external experts as well. Training institutions are thus following the route taken by the seminar organizers, towards a market-oriented service centre. Specifically, the question arises of what services a training provider has to develop in order to comprehend and act upon his customers' quality requirements. In the case of the training provider, product orientation has to be secondary to customer and process orientation.

This effect of internal quality assurance in continuing training on the training market is described in the case of the large enterprise *Renault Portugal*:

"The enterprise resorts to the provision of services when it cannot meet the needs identified. It is at this level that the link-up with the training market takes place. To this end, the enterprise prepares a specification which details, in particular, the objects of the service required, the content in very general terms, the deadlines, the site of the training, the characteristics of the participants and who is inviting the suppliers to present their proposal.

Having consulted the market and received the proposals, the enterprise starts the analysis process. This is undertaken by multidisciplinary teams who select the most suitable proposal and open negotiations.

It must be emphasized that the specification itself contains a brief description of the criteria for assessing the proposal. These are then brought to the knowledge of the suppliers.

This approach by the enterprise generally results in the suppliers adopting quality procedures. Consequently, its end effect is to improve the functioning of the training market" [P1].

The *French* case of the small enterprise *CELIT-France* shows that quality management in SMEs can also produce comparable effects on the market, forcing external training providers to rethink:

"*A more personalized trainer/customer relationship*: In general terms, and for the enterprise in particular, the practice of buying from a catalogue is tending to die out. Service providers are showing greater willingness to listen to the specific needs of enterprises, and are making appropriate proposals. On the client's side, this trend is expressed by the drafting of more precise specifications. The enterprise is in better control of analysing its needs and tries to formalize the methods of training it expects. But the discussion with the service provider is essential in order to clarify/correct the definition of needs. The enterprise attaches importance to this dialogue and expects its contractors to show an ability to rethink and reexamine. It rejects out of hand those service providers who make an offer without prior analysis ...

Specification and quality: the importance attached to the dialogue with the trainers in the specification definition phase extends to the implementation phase. The enterprise does not limit its conception of quality to mere compliance with the specification, which necessarily leaves grey areas when needs have not been made explicit, and sometimes proves inadequate (if the trainees' needs and learning capacity have been wrongly assessed, etc.). Thus the enterprise expects its trainer to be able to listen, provide follow-up and adapt during training. The enterprise tries to reconcile obtaining competitive proposals from trainers with a desire to maintain permanent relations, in order to exploit the knowledge of the enterprise which the trainers have been able to acquire, and the capacity for dialogue which that gives them."

In the documented cases, it must not be overlooked that the burden of quality control is increasingly passing from the customers to the suppliers of continuing train-

ing. The awakening of quality awareness among customers for continuing training is associated with a need for the training institutions to be able credibly to verify the quality of their offers ex ante. This is not merely a question of training marketing. Training providers install whole quality management systems, which have replaced extensive quality checks by the customer enterprises and departments. Control of the customers is thus becoming *more methodical*: it now only verifies whether the training supplier's quality assurance is functional, rather than reviewing each individual training measure. This has effects on the suppliers' market.

- *Certifications* to recognized standards, especially EN ISO 9000, are becoming a medium of competition among the training institutions. They relieve the customer of the need to carry out his own special checks on the training institution's quality management, and to some extent create transparency in quality assurance in continuing training which affects the market. At the same time, there is an apparent risk that standards may be complied with at the lowest possible level if they are to be used merely to gain custom. EN ISO 9000, in particular, allows considerable scope for this.

- Formalized quality assurance methods and certifications entail high *costs*. If these costs are rolled on to the training suppliers, they result in a new selection of training providers: smaller providers and those in the social sector will find it more difficult to bear such burdens. This can give rise to the risk of narrowing the continuing training market and protecting larger suppliers from the effects of competition.

- The problem of *quality assurance of individualized training services* seems essential. Continuing training is becoming less capable of standardization; it is differentiated by content and forms of instruction across the in-house division of labour. This calls for

a high planning and evaluation effort, which has to be supplied again for each new measure. Appropriate offers can be made to the firms, as customers, when they have a large number of identical jobs with similar learning requirements. This means that, as a rule, only large enterprises will be likely to commission such continuing training and evaluation services. Smaller and medium-sized enterprises will, at best, only be able to call upon the necessary demand potential for the planning of tailor-made continuing training concepts evaluated for their special needs in the context of multi-enterprise sectoral continuing training associations, with all the special problems these create. This problem has been dealt with in detail in [Chapter 2].

On the basis of this difficulty, the small *French* enterprise *Raymond Geoffray* derives its desire for greater market transparency, through government initiatives if necessary:

"*Implications for the client/trainer relationship and outlook* - ... *change in relations with trainers:* Initially, the enterprise looked for no more than a single guideline in the formulation of its needs, then it looked in the catalogues for a product which could do the job.

This phase is over now, and the enterprise has become more demanding. It no longer wishes to choose from pre-existing offers, but asks that an offer be created as a function of its needs. It asks the service provider to make a proposal, then corrects that proposal as a function of its needs. This has sometimes forced trainers to adapt and train themselves to supply what is required.

What is more, mastery of the demand for training extends to the training process itself. When it seems that the service is tending/drifting towards less interesting content, the enterprise endeavours to reorient the training. This, of course assumes that the enterprise is monitoring the course of the service, which is not always the case, but does arise when the training takes place over a long period and/or on its own premises ...

Danger of developing loyalty to a trainer: The natural tendency, when a trainer has given satisfaction, is to work with him again. The risk, however, is that he may not be competent in the subject-matter of the new requirement. The enterprise has already experienced disappointments of this kind ...

Lack of identification of the offer and the relevance of the institutional approach: It is necessary for the state to tidy up the market. It must have a register of the service providers and the disciplines in which they are competent.

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The draft of an OPQF is very relevant in this respect. However, it is not sufficient, and it is still necessary for the enterprise to ask its service providers to demonstrate training courses which it has already carried out (similar to that required), together with client references, so that the enterprise can telephone them if necessary to obtain their point of view.

Certification would also be a very important symbol of quality. A priori, if only one of two training enterprises was certified, the enterprise would favour it.

Finally, the enterprise is aware of the existence of the AFNOR standards but nas not read them in depth, considering this to be a substantial labour" [F3].

- In contrast to a good many other external service providers, an enterprise discloses internal work organization and personnel management methods to training institutions which are to evaluate continuing training measures. This may possibly touch upon sensitive areas, which can adversely affect the necessary intensity of cooperation.

- The in-house partner cooperating with training providers is generally a continuing training, personnel advancement or personnel department, and is only exceptionally the department for which the training services are being provided. Precisely in the evaluation of continuing training measures, however, direct contact with the participants in the continuing training and their supervisors in the planning and evaluation phase seems essential. Links would therefore have to be created at new levels, which would also affect internal allocations of functions.

In summary, it can be said that although competition in the continuing training market does promote the striving for quality, it makes it difficult to separate suppliers and customers for quality assurance. The very close cooperation among those involved which is regularly necessary for quality assurance in continuing training can be impaired by differences and conflicts of interest among the market participants. The further development will show what methods of cooperative quality assurance, conforming to market needs and at the same time effective, may develop.

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4 Quality assurance and improving the quality of continuing vocational training

Reading through the case descriptions from the Member States, and this summarizing report, may possibly prompt the critical reader to ask where among all the descriptions of in-house training management, training needs analyses, tailor-made continuing training, evaluation, etc., the actual *quality assurance* services are to be found. Ultimately, all the concepts, methods and instruments described are nothing new. We have become familiar with them before under a wide variety of headings. There are long passages, then, in which the cases also read like attempts on the part of the enterprises or training providers to improve their activities in continuing training.

This state of affairs is not particularly surprising. Measures to assure the quality of a product, a process or of a whole organization prove themselves to be necessary in that they take up the existing objectives and review the effectiveness of the processes, or try to improve it, against that background.

Quality assurance has little to add to those continuing training processes which have hitherto enjoyed optimum success in achieving their objectives. All that is needed here is an appropriate undertaking by those involved to pursue their labours consistently in the future. But wherever continuing training has failed to meet its set targets, has met them only at the cost of unacceptable expense, or proves unreliable in achieving them, quality assurance will also result in substantial changes in the continuing training process. At the outset, the quality assurance approach in continuing training means only this: the invariable claim made by in-house continuing training to be target-oriented and efficient is taken seriously, reviewed critically at all levels of planning and implementation, and supported by prompt corrective action. This means that what is really new about this

approach is the attempt to integrate formative evaluation into the continuing training practice.

For all those involved in continuing training, however, the inputs and costs always involved in instituting quality assurance only seem justified when the result is to achieve not just new rules and standards but a genuine improvement in the quality of continuing vocational training.

4.1 Quality in continuing training

Before anything can be said about improving the quality of continuing training, it is first necessary to clarify exactly what is meant by the (good) quality of continuing vocational training.

As mentioned above, the question of quality always has to be answered in relation to objectives. There is no such thing as "the" good continuing training, separate from its specific purpose, any more than there is such a thing as "the" good advisory service, means of transport or production machinery.

4.1.1 Objectives of in-house continuing training

Wherever mention is made of "the" good continuing training, a continuing training objective is necessarily tacitly assumed.

It is very much an essential function of quality assurance in continuing training that it must, first and foremost, account to the managers, employees, lecturers, etc. involved for the objectives they are pursuing through continuing training.

It is no matter of chance, therefore, that, in the cases

from Member States, the determination of the objectives of continuing training and processes of harmonizing those objectives with corporate strategies constantly recur as essential quality assurance points [cf. Chapter 1]. This is how the objectives of continuing training first become transparent and known in many firms. This illustrates the hybrid nature of continuing training just as clearly as possible wrong objectives, and incompatibilities and conflicts between objectives. However painful this realization may be for the missionary teacher, learning is not an end in itself but makes sense only where it benefits identifiable objects of individuals or organizations.

The example cases also make it clear that these objectives of continuing training are extremely heterogeneous.

Although the terms of reference of the study were already quite specific (continuing vocational training in/and for firms), the cases disclose a large number of corporate objectives, various hybrid forms of objectives and also some objectives of states and individuals. The specific orientation of this study towards *in-house continuing training* brings business objectives into sharp focus. Nevertheless, many of the documented cases also emphasize the interests and objectives of the employees and participants involved in continuing training:

- adaptation of employees' technical skills to job requirements

- improving cross-disciplinary employees' skills (key competencies, etc.) in order to make them more flexible and motivated

- improving the firm's competitiveness by giving it more productive and quality-conscious employees

- creating an enthusiastic and creative employee potential as the basis for an innovative and flexible firm.

Quality assurance in continuing training is intended to help ensure these objectives are achieved systematically, focal points being ...

- accurately targeted orientation and implementation of continuing training,

- setting up or improving continuing training management, in-house or in the case of the training provider,

- making continuing training more economical or reducing its cost,

- improving cooperation with external training providers,

- making the act of teaching in continuing training more effective,

- taking the employees' interests into account.

> In the case of Renault Portugal, for example, it is pointed out that the employees associate increased job satisfaction with the skills they have acquired, that they consider their prospects of career advancement to have been safeguarded as a result, and that they generally feel that continuing training has improved their quality of life. These objectives, which employees associate with continuing training, are also found in many other cases [P1].

As a rule, the participation mechanisms are illustrated via which employees and participants in continuing training can bring into the process of in-house continuing training their expectations of continuing training and their career objectives.

Because of the predominant corporate philosophy of greater involvement and integration of all employees, especially into quality assurance processes, thoughts on employee participation and specific methods of ensuring that participation play a major part in virtually all cases [cf. for example L1 and L4, and also P1, UK3, F3, BF1, IRL3].

At this point, however, it should be noted that these participation mechanisms are still methods of *business training management*, which aim to ensure, so far as possible, accurately targeted, efficient and accepted continuing training measures *for the firm's objectives* by involving the employees.

These objectives certainly include the employees' interests to a large extent (employees also have an interest in the competitiveness of their firm as the basis of their job), but they certainly do not have to be identical with the subjective aims of the individual employee. These possible conflicts of aims are hardly documented in the cases, although this may have adverse consequences for the firm. Some cases of government training providers or consumer protection projects in continuing training are at least aware of this aspect of the learner as the subject of his objectives [cf. inter alia D5 (Home Study Protection Act), D4 (Stiftung Warentest), GR5 (INE/GSSE) etc.].

Although quality assurance in continuing training absolutely requires the identification of the objectives of continuing training for its activity, it becomes apparent also from the documented cases that the aims of continuing training can themselves be reflected and reformulated by systematic quality assurance. The way in which this happens is that in many cases the formulation of clear continuing training objectives by the firm's management is made necessary for the first time by the introduction of quality assurance procedures in continuing training. In this way, the scope of possible continuing training options becomes apparent to those responsible in a completely new way, and new continuing training objectives are often defined accordingly.

On the other hand, the documented involvement of all employees as active participants in the planning, implementation and evaluation of continuing training, which is documented in many cases, has the effect that new pros-

pects and interests influence the objectives of in-house continuing training. Quality assurance in continuing training can thus help to change the objectives of continuing training simply by its permanent compulsion to reflect upon all stages of continuing training.

4.1.2 Quality assurance in teaching and learning

Against the background of a given objective, quality assurance in continuing training is intended to make all the training processes more effective and efficient. This relates especially to the actual teaching act of instruction and learning, including its preparation and follow-up.

The quality of the operation of teaching and learning is characterized by the suitability of the means used and their rational deployment.

All the familiar questions of vocational teaching arise here again and need to be answered against the respective background situation:

- Is the content being taught suitable for the learning objectives?
- Are the teaching methods appropriate to the learning objectives and the pupils?
- Is the learning location or combination of locations appropriate?
- Do the lecturers' methods conform to the learning objective?
- Are non-personal learning media being used in a way which is appropriate for the learning objectives and the participants?

Neither these questions nor others regarding the effectiveness and efficiency of the act of teaching are new. The innovative element of quality assurance resides in the fact that these questions are no longer discussed by scientific experts; they are raised in the course of the practical process of continuing training, and have to be answered every day. The practical need for a solution and the real compulsion to rationalization to which in-house continuing training is subject result in continuous efforts to make it more effective, to try out improved solutions constantly, etc.

Even in this process, conflicting interests are entirely possible. At this point it is less a conflict of objectives regarding the value of the continuing training than a conflict between the firm's interest in making training more effective and the traditional academic solutions favoured by the continuing training personnel within the firm or working for external providers.

4.2 What do quality assurance methods contribute to the improvement of continuing training?

Quality assurance in continuing training is initially nothing more than a method of training management, whereby continuing training processes and organizations are to be permanently optimized in accordance with the respective objectives.

As is always the case with the use of management methods, what matters is that the method should be applied in a way which is appropriate to the objective and situation. If this is forgotten, the danger exists that quality assurance procedures will solidify into bureaucracy, and what will be achieved will be the opposite of what is intended.

The documentation of the cases from the Member States

makes it clear that forms of quality assurance exist there which still have their problems on the side of the systematization and precision of measurement, just as sometimes the real improvements of continuing training remain obscure. This again confirms that quality assurance in continuing training is a developing area.

4.2.1 Quality assurance as the realization of a formal regulatory system for training management

As stated earlier, quality assurance in continuing training initially lies solely in the attempt to study existing objectives, procedures, measures, methods and products in continuing training to determine their compatibility and efficiency, and harmonize them accordingly.

No vocational training or didactic idea, or any idea which is new in terms of educational psychology, is genuinely induced into the continuing training scene via quality assurance. No new concept relating to the innovative organization of learning or of new roles for the instructors is imparted.

The quality assurance specialist is not necessarily a specialist in continuing training. Completely divorced from specific continuing training measures, contents and methods, quality assurance endeavours to find procedures which formally convey a planning and implementation of continuing training which is suitable for objectives and effective at all levels of the process.

This aspect of formalization through quality assurance becomes particularly clear in corresponding national or international standards on quality assurance in continuing training.

In a number of cases, the reference of training providers

or firms to these "quality standards in continuing training" takes effect, up to the point of certification of training departments or training providers as organizations which operate and are structured in accordance with standard series EN ISO 9000 or national standards [cf. Digression on EN ISO 9000 and Chapter 3].

Naturally, this in itself will not guarantee any improvement of continuing training, for example in the sense of vocational teaching or in the sociopolitical sense of the "White Paper on Growth, Competition and Employment".

At any rate, quality assurance, simply as a formal system of rules on the management of continuing training processes within the firm, achieves the integration of continuing training events into the centre of the firm's development. Included in this are strategic reflections by the management on continuing training objects, together with considerations relating to efficiency improvements and financing. Quality assurance in continuing training ensures that this kind of management preoccupation with training matters is not sporadic and random but systematic and continuous. Continuing vocational training thus abandons its marginal position in the firm in favour of becoming an economic factor in the firm's success.

In all the documented cases of firms from the national studies, this phenomenon becomes clear.

For example, Paul Jung says in writing of the *Luxembourg* cases of *ARBED* and *Du Pont*: "In the two cases described, the needs to be met derive from a translation of the enterprises' operational and strategic objectives into action plans which require clearly defined qualifications and thus generate an approach whereby the existing qualifications are adapted to the target qualifications through individualized training plans. In the two enterprises selected, the approach adopted comprises a precise definition of the objects to be achieved by means of the training, the elaboration of continuous control during the implementation of the measure, and, a posteriori, an evaluation of the results achieved. In both cases, training is clearly defined as an investment and those responsible for training act as training consultants" [L].

Conversely, this formalization of continuing training

management involves the danger that continuing training within the firm will become bureaucratized, that administrative regulations will cramp creativity, and that the focal point of attention will be monetary calculability and short-term quantification.

These risks are expressed in the expert's judgements and also in a number of example cases in the studies.

> Joël Bonamy notes critically, in the *French* study, that quality assurance has made a major contribution to the rationalization of the formal relationship between sellers and purchasers of continuing training, but little contribution to improving teaching:
>
> "Efforts relating to the planning of training have, hitherto, been limited to mastering the act of teaching itself (the only attempts relate to the most predictable and reproducible types of training, such as training in languages and computer systems). A first problematical aspect that the quality approache can do little to take into account is that of involving the trainee himself in the quality approach and the mastery of the act of teaching. It seems, in fact, that the quality approach has been focused, hitherto, on the relation between the client enterprise and the training body but fails to apprehend the trainer/trainee relationship which, however, is where the essence of quality resides. This aspect remains a "black box", which is currently prompting those involved to wonder how to handle it" [F].

In some large European enterprises which, in connection with their certification under EN ISO 9000, have also often subjected their continuing training departments to the analogous standards, the suspicion appears justified that, by way of a vastly increased system of forms and an overwhelming compulsion to documentation, continuing training can actually be administered "to death". This danger becomes particularly apparent where quality assurance is applied to continuing training for SMEs. As already stated in Chapter 2, these enterprises need anything but a comprehensive formal set of rules to systemize their continuing training. Simple recommendations to assist direct communication among all those involved on continuing training matters, including an evaluation of the successes of continuing training and information on the quality of external training providers, are certainly more helpful to these firms than the introduction of additional administrative systems.

On the other hand, it is logical that the desired internal treatment of continuing training as an investment in the growth of the firm should bring with it the appropriate business management processes.

Quality assurance in continuing training therefore implies precise costing and the legitimate effort to achieve the most cost-effective alternative in the form of continuing training [cf. the Spanish cases E2: INI-TENEQ, E4 and E5]. It should not be overlooked, however, that quality assurance is not only controlling, and merely improving the economics of the continuing training may fail to achieve its objectives. The reason this risk is particularly great is that the offsetting in cash terms of the benefit of continuing training cannot succeed satisfactorily, in the nature of things, so that, in continuing training events, special attention in the course of rationalization is paid to the costs as the only really quantifiable parameter.

For the same reason, auxiliary constructions to quantify the successes of continuing training (for example reduction of absenteeism rates, company suggestion scheme) should also be characterized as such. They are not central indicators of the benefits of continuing training.

Additions to employees' skills result in increased productivity in the working process, improved production quality, greater flexibility and ability to react of the working systems - and they thus play a part in deciding the competitiveness and economic success of the firm. This has long been known to the experts - but precise quantification of this contribution made by continuing training to the economic success of the firm is impossible in operational practice. For this reason use has to be made of auxiliary constructions and clear indicators, in order to permit at least qualitatively sound success appraisals for quality assurance methods.

The present weakness of the evaluation of continuing training in everyday business practice contributes to a risk that quality assurance in continuing training is unilaterally perceived as a way of improving economics. Where quality assurance is perceived as mere bureaucratization by means of sets of rules and mere improving of economics by means of costing, there really is a danger that learning and teaching will be deprived of their innovative and creative power.

In this case there would be justified fears that teaching and learning processes would become routine and commonplace, and would eventually be suitable for rationalization at will, like other working processes within the firm. However, these fears, which are also mentioned in some cases,

> The French study mentions this in connection with the influence of quality assurance in continuing training on the role of the teachers and trainers:
>
> "The cultural change which is taking place may affect the incentives behind their action and motivation. The quality approaches must therefore handle the tension between:
>
> - a logic of trivialization (a codified contrivance, training is a department like any other),
>
> - and the constraint specific to training, where management of risks and unexpected situations involves retaining degrees of adaptability, ability to react through dialogue and, more broadly, capacity for innovation" [F].

also have a different background in the more traditionalistic notions of some teachers or teaching associations. In fact, the claim of quality assurance systems in continuing training *also* lies in the critical scrutiny of the instructional act of teaching and learning itself.

Although this is a specific case in which the weakness of evaluation mentioned above is still particularly noticeable, quality assurance endeavours to assemble the optimum learning material, teaching methods, media and teachers for the given learning objectives. As a result, naturally, the involved lecturer finds the veil removed

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from the "mysteries" of his successes or failures. But such an ending to "guru status" in continuing training certainly does not imply that the teaching/learning process becomes commonplace, or that the role of the teacher loses its complexity - on the contrary. The systematic reflection of all teaching and learning processes in continuing training, with a view to their improvement, is of benefit to both teachers and learners. However, the suitable evaluation methods for this are still lacking.

If the risks of quality assurance in continuing training for the enterprise cases go by the names of bureaucratization and unthinking efforts at economy, the training providers are exposed to other dangers.

As was stated in Chapter 3, external training providers - because of the requirements of firms and government authorities but also because of the requirements of individual customers for continuing training - are increasingly coming under pressure to subject their own procedures to quality assurance or to have their organization certified under national standards or EN ISO 9000.

In all Member States, certification institutions already exist - or are in the process of being set up - for confirming quality management by training providers. As regards improved market transparency and consumer protection for SMEs and individuals, this flood of certifications of training providers is, of course, welcome. In a number of documented cases from the national studies, it becomes apparent that such attempts to gain a quality certificate can modernize training providers' working processes and their whole organization, and result in products being offered which are suitable for the market [cf. for example F5 CESI-Normandie, or for a case of a certification institution D3, CERTQUA].

On the other hand, it is impossible to overlook the fact that for many training providers quality certification is

primarily a marketing instrument. This creates a danger, in the fact that quality certification under EN ISO 9000, for example, is often confused with evidence of good quality teaching arrangements, whereas in fact the certificate certifies nothing except the existence of quality management within the organization. Naturally, this can and should also mean that the vocational training services offered are better, but the certificate does not guarantee this.

The controversial discussion regarding certification of training providers raises a few questions for Pedro Cordova in *Spanish* study:

"The practice of quality certification of training institutions has not become established in Spain as it has in the other countries. More than that, the possibility is contemplated with extreme reluctance, especially by the actual establishments concerned. Is the reason a more convenient situation for professional activity? Is it accpetable to expect the customary laws of the market to clarify the available training, to classify institutions in terms of their quality and efficiency? Is there not too much risk, during this period, of seeing wasting of resources and frustration of expectations, and the degradation of the image of training? Is not this a serious diluted irresponsibility, given that, in view of the complexity and difficulty of mastering the aspects of measurement or verification schemes which relate to human resources within the organization, there has been neglect of the use of systematic approach methods which would make it possible to obtain sufficient information to validate and decide upon the effectiveness or relevance of the processes or the options?" [E].

4.2.2 Quality assurance as an opportunity for improved continuing vocational training

Most of the cases from the national studies are, in the strict sense, certainly not documents for implementing quality assurance in continuing training - at least not if the formal ISO requirements are taken as a basis. What is regularly documented, instead, is how a more systematized form of training management (or elements of one) result in a generally improved result of continuing training in or for a firm. The procedure followed by this training management is demonstrated, together with the way in which it acts to improve continuing training measures, continuing training services, the cost struc-

ture of continuing training, etc. Finally, the beneficial effects on the learning process itself, the employees' skills and the consequent benefit for the firm are indicated. The Spanish study, in particular, refers to the need for defining quality assurance in continuing training in order to ensure that communication takes the correct form.

Apart from the fact of the imprecise concept of quality assurance in continuing training, the cases thus characterized refer to real improvements in in-house continuing training, extending through to the instructional act of teaching and learning, which has certainly been stimulated by the attempt to introduce systematic continuing training management (in quality assurance).

Thus, although the previous section referred to possible dangers arising from a misunderstanding of quality assurance in continuing training, pointing out that quality assurance means the management of continuing training and not necessarily improvements in teaching or the achievement of sociopolitically desirable objectives, nevertheless the available cases and the expert's judgements leave no room for doubt that such an improvement in continuing training can be achieved by quality assurance.

Joël Bonamy, too, establishes this innovative possibility of quality assurance in continuing training:

"The current extension of quality approaches is having an important structuring effect. It is, in fact, an innovation in ways of managing training and in market organization. Its effects are leading both to a rationalization of the economics of training (attempt to control costs and processes, better definition of needs and greater suitability of offers) and professionalization (restructuring of the market based on a concern for transparency)" [F].

In fact the quality assurance approach in continuing training offers many opportunities, through its consistent application within the firm or by the training provider, to introduce improvements into continuing vocational training practice.

Mention has already been made earlier of the necessary

reflection on objectives of continuing training, whereby, first, continuing training is demonstrated to the management to be a strategic business factor, and secondly the external training providers make customers' requirements the objective of their quality assurance.

Equally committing is the *formation of indicators to achieve objectives* at all levels of the continuing training process, which makes the development and status of that process transparent at all times to all those involved.

It is only as a result of this that the evaluation of events in continuing training takes on its true dimension, and also its permanent incentive.

Evaluation as a constant reflective and self-reflective process of all those involved in continuing training is, first, undoubtedly a requirement which arises from the quality assurance approach. In addition, however, this process is also the driving force behind productive change and improvement in continuing vocational training. The hinge between quality assurance in continuing training and the desired qualitative improvements in continuing training and especially the instructional act of teaching and learning is thus the *joint process of continuous reflection by all those involved in continuing training*. Quality standards and management systems merely provide the occasion for this process, and ensure that the necessary reflection criteria are available in the form of continuing training objectives and success criteria.

The creativity of the employees, managers, lecturers, etc. provides the content for this permanent process of reflection - thus giving rise to innovation and improved quality in continuing training.

By this indirect route, quality assurance in continuing training actually becomes a driving force at all levels

of the continuing training process for innovations and improvements. This is also the focus of documented cases in the national studies, in which such improvements to the elements of the continuing training process are described:

- analyses of training needs

- learning organization

- didactics and teaching methods

- new roles for teachers and pupils

- learning contents

- combination of learning locations

- use of media.

Quality assurance in continuing training is described as having beneficial effects on these and other factors in the continuing training process.

Even more important than these effects, however, is a tendency which is apparent in all the national studies and which is gaining ground in the firms as a result of quality assurance in continuing training: this is the growing realization that quality assurance can only be achieved if all employees are fully involved. Quality assurance in the continuing training sector, as elsewhere, can only produce its effects in terms of process optimization and innovation if it changes from a management method into a "bottom-up" movement by the workforce [cf. for example P1, IRL3, GR3, BF1, F3, L1, L2, L4, UK3].

The hinge function, referred to earlier, of continuous joint reflection on ways of achieving improvements in continuing training, which is what makes quality assur-

ance a factor in corporate innovation in the first place, necessarily builds on opportunities for self-determination and independent responsibility within the firm. Included in this is a receptiveness on the part of the corporate culture for greater participation and shared responsibility for all employees.

In relation to the quality assurance process itself, more and more elements of self-assessment, self-monitoring and automatic improvement will replace external control mechanisms and top-down instructions.

> In the Luxembourg case of Du Pont, for example, the firm is actually going to the point of increasingly revoking quality management standards in order to give the employees more independent responsibility [L4].

It is becoming apparent that quality assurance here must become an ascending spiral: the employees can only perform these increased tasks of process optimization, extending into continuing training, on the basis of appropriate skills (continuing training) - and this leads on to new possibilities, etc.

Enterprises, however, are not training institutions, nor are they institutes for developing the personalities of their employees. It is therefore necessary to remember that the processes that have been described for enabling employees to optimize processes in continuing training are needed in completely identical form to optimize processes in the firm's actual production activities.

Against the present background of market growth and technological development, promising forms of enterprise and work organization for European firms are those in which an important role is assigned to the development of their employees' planning skills.

5. Quality Assurance in Continuing Vocational Training: Summary and Outlook

It is clear from the views of the European experts who were involved in the national case studies and from the cases themselves how much importance is attached to applying quality assurance systems and related measures to continuing vocational training.

With the quantitative expansion in the continuing training sector and the strategic importance of continuing training for the economic and social development of the Member States, the *quality* issue has become an urgent one. Quality assurance procedures are used to reflect continuously and systematically on training needs, results and effectiveness, leading to an ever higher standard of continuing training in firms and among training providers. Such procedures have a lasting effect on the continuing training scene.

This synthesis report on the current state of affairs in nine Member States is based on 47 case studies from the nine countries and on the views of experts who conducted studies on the situation of quality assurance in continuing training in their respective countries.

Chapters 1 to 4 present an analytical appraisal of the national experts' work, along with a "digression" on the use of ISO EN 9000 in continuing training, by reference to the following aspects:

- continuing training, quality management and quality assurance in firms;
- quality assurance in terms of cooperation between firms and external training providers;
- quality assurance and structuring of the continuing training market;
- quality assurance and ways of improving the quality of continuing vocational training.

The next section but one deals with the problems and outlook for quality assurance in continuing training, but first of all, and as a service to the busy reader, let us take a look at the most important findings from chapters 1 to 4.

5.1 Summary of the current state of quality assurance in continuing training in Europe

5.1.1 Summary: Quality assurance and quality management in firms

Many firms in Europe regard in-house continuing training as a central instrument for achieving *economic goals*. Improving the skills and knowledge of workers has become an essential factor in terms of business competition. Continuing training is seen as an *investment*, which has to be properly planned and assessed.

The quality of such training is therefore measured in terms of the contribution it makes to strategic and economic success. The quality of the content and methods tends thus to

take a backseat, being a factor merely in assessing the indirect effectiveness of training measures, but not as a factor in its own right. Vetting procedures which serve to assess the cost-effectiveness of continuing training play an important role.

In the documented case studies, the important thing is not to assess the quality of particular courses and seminars, but rather to gauge the quality assurance of the entire training process by reference to the various phases:

- project planning and organisation
- ascertainment of needs
- conceptual development
- participant information and counselling
- training proper
- practical experience (where appropriate)
- testing/certification
- practical application.

The difference between the various cases is that different *players* are responsible for the quality assurance of in-house training measures. As a rule, evaluation and quality assurance are the job of the firm's human resources or training departments. In some cases, though, other groups are involved, e.g. management, the participants' hierarchical superiors or the participants themselves. In such cases, the evaluation exercise meshes closely with the firm's actual requirements.

In all cases, the basic criterion for quality assurance is the success or otherwise of *practical application*. Thus, training courses are designed specifically to correspond to the workplace requirements. In many cases, the question is left open as to how more general requirements – e.g. in terms of "across-the-board skills" – can be evaluated and converted into training design concepts within the context of quality assurance.

In most cases, ISO EN 9000 is used as a basic yardstick, with certification applying either to the firm as a whole or to its training department.

New requirements in terms of quality assurance in in-house training arise from the more widespread use of innovative forms of in-house teaching, e.g. computer-based training, open learning, open distance learning, project and group learning. All these forms seek to create a closer link between work and training. As a result, quality assurance in vocational training now has to address subjects which used to be of no concern to it, e.g. organisation of the work process, the training-friendliness of particular work environments, the pro-learning design of workplaces, etc.

5.1.2 Summary: Quality assurance in terms of cooperation between firms and training providers

It is evident from all the documented cases from the nine Member States that cooperation between firms and external training providers is becoming increasingly important, both for large business and for small and medium-sized undertakings.

In terms of such cooperation, the essential task of the quality assurance component is to keep a check on, and optimise, the various phases of the training process and the process as a whole, with a view to making constant adjustments to quality. It is also concerned essentially with *coordination* between the firm and the training provider, a process which is made difficult where two parties have to address the same process from differing angles.

- *Large firms* tend to deal with this problem by taking the lead themselves in quality assurance and giving the training provider precise details of the task at hand, ascertaining themselves whether the result has been satisfactory.

- *Small and medium-sized undertakings* are, in most cases, unable to play this dominating role and are dependent for their planning and quality assurance needs on external help.

- *Training providers* address the subject in different ways. Some of them take on the quality assurance role themselves in cooperation with firms. This is particularly true of providers with a strong sector-oriented background; they tend to analyse likely training needs and incorporate firms' expertise into their own organisational processes. Other providers obtain certification under ISO EN 9000 or equivalent national standards as a way of preparing for improved cooperation with firms. It has to be said, though, that in addition to the documented "exemplary training providers", Europe has a large number of providers for whom "tailor-made" and "quality assurance" are unknown terms.

Cooperation between large businesses and training providers will continue to be dictated by the dominance of large businesses in matters concerning vocational training; at the same time, though, something needs to be done to create appropriate forms of cooperation between small and medium-sized businesses and the training providers (these being of great importance to Europe's economy). With a view to improving the quality of such cooperation and to quality assurance considerations, both sides need support in the form of information, practical assistance, resources and instruments.

5.1.3 Summary: Quality assurance and structuring of the vocational training market

The basic principle underlying the way individuals and firms are supplied with continuing vocational training is the *market principle*. All nine Member States have a continuing training market in which the State intervenes only as a regulator, providing back-up and subsidiary assistance for particular target groups.

It therefore follows that quality assurance services are provided very largely via market mechanisms. Quality can be assured in various ways:

- *Training market's own resources:* Alongside price, the quality of training is an essential element in achieving market success. The way training is marketed has a retroeffect on the quality of training provision. However, a number of case

studies indicate that there are functional problems in the market which might adversely affect the quality of continuing training.

- *Improving market transparency:* Lack of transparency on the training market means that the provision of information and advice is an essential quality component in training supply. In some cases, information centres are a public institution or are at least run by more than one association or institution. They have the advantage of helping clients to compare the quality aspect of whatever training is on offer.

- *Self-appraisal by training providers:* Many training institutes devise and publish their own quality standards voluntarily and undertake to apply them in their dealings with clients. In many cases, compliance with such standards is overseen by independent organisations.

- *Certification of diplomas and certificates:* One indirect way of checking on the quality of training institutes is by way of recognised certificates and diplomas resulting from tests or examinations; the success rate gives an indication of the quality of the training.

- *General standards:* On the vocational training market, the importance of general standards for the quality of such training is very much on the increase. Many of the case studies report on ISO standards, national quality standards for continuing training or sectoral quality guidelines.

- *State intervention:* Member States are increasingly influencing the continuing training market by their activities aimed at coordinating public-sector funding of continuing vocational training and through direct statutory intervention. In many cases, the quality of the training is the prime criterion.

The continuing training market is bound to undergo lasting change in response to more intensive efforts to impose quality assurance standards. Training institutes will increasingly have to produce evidence of quality and, in some cases, even open up their internal quality assurance system for inspection by their clients. The days are gone when they were able to see themselves simply as a separate service-provider, offering ready-made products; nowadays, they are judged by whether they can react flexibly to varying quality requirements on the part of firms and individuals.

5.1.4 Summary: Quality assurance and ways of improving the quality of continuing vocational training

To avoid the risk of too much red tape and short-sighted cost-cutting, and at the same time to realise the innovative potential of the quality assurance approach for continuing training, the experts endorse the conclusion drawn from the national studies that further development and research work is necessary.

- The formal requirements addressed to training managers in firms and to training-providers, as described in national or international quality standards and procedures, must be given a teaching-related content and kept under close scrutiny to ensure that there is a genuine improvement in teaching standards.

- Small and medium-sized businesses in particular must receive external help from training providers in the quality assurance process (cf. Chapter 2); they must not be put off by complex regulatory systems for quality assurance. There is a need for simple methods for small and medium-sized businesses which are based on in-house practice and on the available staff and material resources, leading to training activities being properly integrated into everyday business life. The quality certification of training providers can, in such cases, help to improve market transparency.

- To ensure that the quality assurance approach is not reduced to mere cost-conscious vetting systems, the important thing is to take up the evaluation issue and find practicable ways of deciding on success indicators and how to measure success. A central role here has to go to the systematic encouragement of self-assessment.

- There is also a need to evaluate the purely technical side of learning and teaching. As far as optimising the learning effect is concerned, there is an urgent need for ways of assessing various learning methods under practical conditions. Here again, self-assessment on the part of learners and teachers is an important aspect.

One thing that should always be borne in mind is that it is not the formal requirements of quality management which improve the quality of continuing training. The real success comes from the next step, i.e. the active participation of all the firm's workers in the process of thinking about and optimising the training arrangements. In terms of giving content to abstract quality assurance standards, what is needed specifically here is a procedure which guarantees the active integration of workers at all levels of the training process. There are plenty of examples of this in the case studies. Devising practical procedures here would be a useful exercise for all companies in Europe, and particularly for the small and medium-sized ones.

5.2 Quality assurance in continuing vocational training: Problems and outlook

The experts' appraisals in the national studies on quality assurance in continuing training reveal quite a number of problems and avenues to be explored.

There can be no doubt that methods of quality assurance have not kept pace with the expansion and growing importance of continuing vocational training Europe. Experience over the past few years has shown that abstract methods of quality assurance and methods derived from other sectors in the field of continuing training have failed to generate satisfactory results. What are missing are *special* procedures for quality assurance in training:

- The correct application of quality assurance systems and methods in respect of continuing training must be guaranteed and made operational at all levels of the training process. In other words, the first step must be to convert formal quality management or quality standard requirements into specific training processes.

- The application of quality assurance systems to continuing vocational training tends to highlight "old" shortcomings on the training scene when seen from a different perspective. For instance, the absence of adequate evaluation methods and instruments has long been a subject of debate among training specialists. So far, though, the debate has remained largely academic and has generated no practical consequences. For quality assurance, though, evaluation is a *conditio sine qua non*.

- The quality management of continuing training creates interactive effects for the "corporate culture" and for the way firms and work are organised.

The quality of in-house continuing training is being measured increasingly by reference to the creativity and innovative potential of the firm's workers, i.e. those receiving the training and who will be required to contribute to the future competitiveness of the firm. Such potential can only be realised by making appropriate changes to corporate structures and processes.

Taking the structure of this report as a guide, we shall now take a look at the deficits in terms of in-house vocational training quality assurance which emerge from the case studies in the nine Member States. The summaries of the experts' opinions and the results of the case study analyses might constitute a suitable basis for proposals on pilot projects and research projects under the Leonardo programme.

5.2.1 Quality management and quality assurance in firms

- *Quality assurance in respect of in-house learning arrangements*

  In many pro-learning, innovative companies, in-house training is closely meshed with the actual working process, either through special forms of learning (i.e. workplace-related skilling, using production staff as instructors, conducting business audits) or through some organisational form of linkage. At the same time, the quality assurance aspect usually concentrates on optimising *training measures*, rather than addressing the general in-house training environment. So far, we have seen only very few instances of quality assurance which incorporate targeted changes to the in-house learning environment: e.g. the design of learning-friendly workplaces, training up in-house "multipliers", the organisational integration of the training department and specialist and line departments. Given the strategic importance of in-house training, such concepts would lend themselves to a holistic approach to quality management.

- *Using teaching methods as a basis for evaluating in-house vocational training*

Many firms regard continuing training as an investment warranting considerable care and attention. Perceiving the skilling of employees as an investment factor accords with a form of evaluation and quality assurance which is geared in the first instance to business parameters. Quite apart from the still unresolved theoretical and methodological problems of how to evaluate training input, this kind of approach to training has hitherto existed side by side (but unconnected) with more work-related and learning-psychology methods of evaluation. We shall in the future see the gradual development of concepts for operationalising and modifying such work-related and learning-psychology methods so that they become readily usable in firms and by training providers, and which render them compatible with more business-oriented quality assurance concepts.

- *Involving co-workers in the quality assurance of in-house training*

Chapter 4 in particular emphasises the central importance of involving co-workers in the process of vocational training quality assurance. By getting staff to reflect on the appropriateness and effectiveness of continuing training, the result should be to turn formal quality management rules into the feedstock for genuine improvements in the quality of continuing training. In other words, the success of quality assurance measures stands and falls with the active involvement of those concerned at all levels. This is in line with the stated views of the Member States' national experts. Some of the documented cases provide evidence of what firms are doing to secure such involvement. So far, only very few of the firms covered by the case studies have concerned themselves with worker involvement. Such questions concern the organisational aspect (planning groups, consultation exercises, training circles, etc.) and the human resources aspect (e.g. awareness training, motivation and worker empowerment).

- *Quality management systems based on ISO EN 9000*

The certification of training providers and in-house training departments under ISO EN 9000 is acquiring increased importance throughout Europe. The ISO standard itself does not set out criteria for the content of vocational training, being conceived as a procedural norm for quality assurance in all sectors. It can therefore be applied bureaucratically without really doing anything to improve the quality of vocational training. No attempt has so far been made – at least as far as is discernible from the documentation – to give any real vocational teaching content to the quality objectives, criteria and indicators in the ISO certification procedure – neither in practical cases nor in the scientific accompaniment to certifications. It is likely, though, that the documentation and publication of teaching guides and manuals will take the massive increase in training certification in certain Member States as a starting point for making qualitative improvements to vocational training systems.

5.2.2 Improved cooperation between firms and external training providers

The drive for quality assurance in vocational training must embrace all those involved in the continuing training process if there is to be a lasting improvement. In real terms, this objective goes beyond the limits of individual firms and increasingly frequently leads to cooperative efforts between firms and training providers. Of particular interest here are collaborative moves involving small and medium-sized businesses and training providers, although cooperation between large firms and external trading providers is also giving rise to new forms of cooperation on the quality assurance front.

- *Helping firms to draw up specifications for cooperation-minded training providers*

  It is evident from some of the documented case studies that many large businesses draw up their specifications so that the services rendered by external training providers fit in almost effortlessly with in-house quality assurance procedures. These formalised cooperation processes enable the various parties in the firm to get used to dealing with external training providers. Tailor-made training is one of the benefits of a well thought-out corporate strategy. At the same time, the clear statement of requirements helps the training providers to gear their services to the needs of the customer. Many firms in Europe currently do not have the requisite know-how to produce specifications for continuing training. Too few of them are in a position to assess what training providers can deliver, and too few are aware of the new forms of vocational learning, etc.

- *Quality assurance as a form of cooperation between small and medium-sized businesses and training providers*

  Whilst, as a general rule, large businesses plan their training management and quality assurance methods as an in-house strategic operation, and only use training providers for certain specified tasks, this is not the case for the majority of small firms. Cooperation with external training providers must be much more broadly conceived in this respect. Strategy-development, planning, implementation and quality assurance must be seen as a joint process for cooperation between the training provider and the firm. In such cases, training providers assume functions which, in large business, would be the task of the company's own training department. Training requires extensive consultation, planning and evaluation work, and throughout the process it is important that the necessary intensive cooperation does not overstretch the staffing, time and financial resources of small and medium-sized businesses. In such cases, quality assurance comes down to the quality of cooperation between the firm and the training provider. The important thing is to take the wide range of forms of cooperation between small businesses and training providers (of which there are already examples in Europe), devise transferable procedures and make these procedures available as simple aids for firms and training providers alike. While such practical instruments, materials and procedures often involve the training providers in major reorganisation (but also open up new areas of business), the organisational aids for small businesses must be based on the practical possibilities open to such firms. It is important to remember that it is not simply a matter of transferring large businesses' procedures

to the smaller firms. The particular strengths of small firms – e.g. direct lines of communication between all members of the firm – can be put to systematic use in the quality assurance of continuing training.

- *Sectoral and local cooperation between firms and training providers*

  The documented case studies on sector-oriented training providers focus quality assurance efforts in cooperation with firms on the central concern of gearing training to firms' particular needs. Training providers can then adapt more specifically to the procedural needs of a particular business sector, which makes it easier to plan and implement place-of-learning combinations, the use of particular media, seminar release arrangements, etc. according to the firm's requirements.

  Quality assurance in such cases takes the form of a range of organisational and procedural structures, making it possible for training providers to anticipate and prepare for cooperation with particular firms in response to sectoral needs. It is important to remember that it is only at the stage of concrete cooperation with particular firms that it becomes possible to evaluate the cooperation process.

  It is a fact, though, that experience in the application of quality assurance procedures by sector-oriented training providers is not available in the same intensity for all sectors and for all Member States.

  In some cases, concepts for boosting cooperation between firms and training providers depend on the two sides being physically close to one another.

  As set out in the White Paper on growth, competitiveness and employment, and as mentioned by IRDAC, cooperation with small businesses may take the form of multiple local or subregional networks. This is a good way of finding out exactly what the regional needs are in terms of continuing training; additionally, local cooperation networks are the best form of covering the wide range of information and consultation requirements. Within the context of a "learning region", quality assurance thereby assumes the duties of running the network by reference to the strategic objective of regional personnel and employment potential.

5.2.3 Evaluation as part of continuing training

Quality assurance in continuing vocational training stands and falls with the way the various elements involved in the training process are examined and assessed.

- *Process evaluation*

  Quality assurance in continuing training is *formative process evaluation*, i.e. evaluation takes the form of a continuous monitoring of the training process and the ongoing adjustment of the process to allow for errors and improvement.

Existing methods of input and output evaluation are not rendered obsolete, since they remain the basis of all forms of training evaluation. However, such methods are no longer used exclusively at the beginning or end of the overall training process. If the ongoing process is to be properly "accompanied", there must be more input/output evaluation points throughout the process. What we lack are transferable criteria, measuring conventions and measuring instruments which, at all stages of the training process, mesh systematically and are both objective and practicable. This is true of the analysis of training requirements, the learning and teaching process and the application transfer function. Only where such procedures, methods and instruments are available is it possible to carry out a proper process evaluation and secure the ongoing quality of the training provided.

- *Transferring methods of teaching evaluation to the sphere of continuing vocational training*

The need for appropriate evaluation methods applies to the teaching side as well. Testing and *assessing teaching and learning arrangements* in continuing vocational training is central to the cause of quality assurance. So far, the discussion on framework conditions, formal procedures and the education policy implications of continuing training has had little or nothing to do with evaluation research on the teaching side, which has in turn been concerned very largely with the learning factor alone. The results of teaching evaluation theory have hitherto made very little impact on the learning process outside teacher training and research institutes. At the same time, very little development work has been done on evaluation instruments which are readily applicable in firms – wherever possible by the people actually doing the learning. However precise the psychologists' measuring methods may appear, they certainly do not lend themselves to continuous application in the business environment. Virtually nothing has been done to explore the ways in which scientifically devised evaluation instruments can be made usable in the day-to-day practice of in-house continuing training. As such, there would appear to be a particularly urgent need for handbooks and documentation on ways of evaluating such training, to be measured against the extent to which they can be used in firms without any external assistance once the project phase is over. Obviously, in-house training practice is not the right context for trying out research designs with control groups. The point here is not research for its own sake, but the best possible process design. Nonetheless, documentation designed for evaluating in-house learning arrangements can be a great help in investigating teaching and learning processes in vocational training. For one thing, it is only here that the effects of differing learning arrangements can be monitored under practical conditions; for another, what we have here is a thousandfold proliferation of field trials in a form which could never be achieved in scientific experimentation.

- *Concepts for self-assessment in continuing training*

It is entirely within the logic of quality assurance in vocational training and in keeping with the nature of modern management systems that all those concerned with the evaluation of training processes in firms – particularly the participants

themselves – should be required to assume more responsibility and be empowered to take their own decisions. *Self-assessment* has the potential for becoming the form of continuing training evaluation – and hence an essential element in the quality assurance procedure – provided certain conditions are met.

The individual worker is the key to the complex requirements of modern firms, and is at the same time central to firms' continuing training efforts. As such, he becomes the main source of information regarding the quality assurance aspect of in-house training, being best placed to provide information on what training is needed and how successful training courses have been.

If self-assessment is to play its part as the true source of improved training provision, firms need to develop a new, more open corporate culture with the requisite level of self-criticism to enable skills deficits to be identified and learning problems addressed without workers having to fear negative consequences for their own careers. Workers who have identified shortcomings in terms of know-how or skills must get the chance to make up those deficits without any negative stigma attached.

Self-assessment makes people more self-assured, and this is only possible if there is an ongoing feedback process with third-party evaluation. People's own appraisal of their potential, problems and limitations must be discussed in a confidential atmosphere with groups of colleagues or their superiors, this being the only way to acquire both the necessary critical distance and the essential self-assurance.

The case studies show that, even in firms which are committed to training, the only self-assessment methods used (if at all) are informal ones. Very little work has gone into developing transferable, formalised methods and instruments of self-assessment. These methods have to be seen not just from the point of view of individuals (what resources, know-how and skills are needed if self-assessment is to be a success?) but also from the angle of practical implementation in the firm: How can they be integrated into existing corporate hierarchical structures?

5.3 Concluding remarks

The present study on "Quality assurance in in-house continuing training" makes available the thematically prepared basic material on the present state of quality assurance in continuing training, based on the nine individual studies from the Member States. This material has been compiled and analysed in accordance with the specifications of the Steering Committee of the FORCE/EUROTECHNET Advisory Committee, and the thematic focal points which were approved at the meetings of that body.

The specification also calls for the synthesis report to form conclusions, on the basis of the national studies, regarding future prospects, problems and development trends in the field of quality assurance in continuing training. Comments regarding this are to be found in the individual chapters, and in concentrated form in [Chapter 5.2]. Clearly, it cannot be the function of an expert report to formulate conclusions regarding further consequences for training policy or practical options associated with that policy. This, in due course, will be the function of the authorized committees or of the representatives of the Commission of the European Union. The present report is to be considered as an information base for such decision processes.

A. ANNEX: SUMMARY OF THE NATIONAL CASE STUDIES

This synthesis report is based on national studies of quality assurance in continuing training which constitute case studies for the application of quality assurance methods within firms. In the annex which follows, the authors of these case studies briefly summarize the status and future prospects of quality assurance in continuing training in their respective countries.

Johan Decramer

A.1 Survey on quality in continuing training – Summary of the contribution of Belgium, the Flemish Community

The contribution the Flemish Community of Belgium, consists of a description of several cases in order to demonstrate the major areas of concern the partners in the landscape of continuing training have to face nowadays.
Continuing training has become a necessity for all workers and is not any longer a privilege for large organisations. All partners recognise that attention should go to continuing training of employees in Small and Medium Sized Enterprises and that therefore the co-operation between firms and the providers of training should be improved. It is also necessary to strive for a better co-operation between the different providers, private institutes, subsidised and governmental organisations and sectoral federations as major role players, and for an increasing transparency in the market.
All described cases illustrate that training providers are aware of the need for better a –quality control– of the training-process and are working on quality from different points of view. As a general conclusion we can say that there is a great need for better communication between the different partners, providers and buyers. Dissemination of good practice in the field of Continuing Training will become possible through a better understanding of the importance and the relevance of modern quality approaches and through the definition and the use of a common vocabulary.
The gathering of the cases does not pretend to be exhaustive nor it is an assembly of success-stories. The general idea was to give a overview of the major concerns some main training-providers in the Flemish Community are dealing with.

Case 1 describes the aspects of quality concern of a Training Institute for SME (Vizo), providing training to managers, self-employed entrepreneurs, staff members and executives of SMEs and family enterprises.
The major concern of VIZO is to install a culture of TQM (Total Quality Management) within the organisation in order to scope with the changing needs of the market. Major areas are
the quality of the design and the development of new training
the quality of the communication with the market and the marketing efforts

- the quality of the training provision itself (projectmanagement)
- the planning of a system for quality measurement

Case 2 shows the efforts of a government training provider, the Vdab (Flemish Employment and Vocational Training Service) is making to apply the management guidelines offered by the ISO standard as guide and instrument for controlling the training process.
The aim of this Quality Program was not to actually obtain the ISO-certification, but to guarantee the quality of training. Quality Policy of the management has been expressed as follows:
we will give clear and correct information about our offer to all possible customers and this in the most adequate and accessible way
we want to adapt our program to the actual and changing needs of the labour market

1 we will make clear agreements (contracts) with all customers, and this in all phases of the training process

2 the progress of every student in the training process should be traceable and demonstrable by means of written documents
evaluation should include proper and useful information on the result of the training

Case 3 illustrates the efforts made to develop computer assisted programs for selfstudy and training other than the classical training suitable for the –average– student. The private institute Ckz (Centre for Total Quality Management, Consulting, Training and Information) lists the advantages of such training packages as follows:
instruction at an individual pace and adapted to the learning capacity of each student
a flexible use at any time and place, according to the production process
a built-in feedback and evaluation system which allows the students to take greater responsibility in their learning process
the added value of the instructor goes more in-depth

Cases 4 to 6 are examples of different approaches to evaluate training.

Case 4: Ehsal Management School uses a customer satisfaction measurement-system as a technique for quality control. Even if customer satisfaction measurement is a result of a subjective feeling and the perception of the customer, it can deliver relevant information for evaluating the trainers and the training. In order to be workable as an instrument for quality control, the measurement system should involve:
the assessment of immediate perception of individual performers (trainers) and individual contributions within the larger framework of the entire cycle
the processing of the result (quantification, analysis and interpretation)
actions towards adjusting, complementing and updating the existing supply

Case 5: the Government of the Flemish Community did a great effort to launch a training program to train all levels of the administrations as part of a so-called Investment-program for training. The case describes the many instruments and channels used for evaluating the training. The main conclusion is that evaluation is merely based on the subjective perception of the participants. Measuring real effects on the participants is only possible if aims are made explicit in advance (in department-oriented training, and in courses intended for specific target group).

Case 6: In 1994, the authorities charged all local administrations to develop a training plan for all employees as an important instrument of HRM. In the organisations, detection of needs, contracting suppliers and evaluate the result of training, are very new. In despite of the fact a training officer was designated in every administration, response to all offers was very small or not relevant for the functioning of the trainee. The key bottleneck in the communication process appeared to be the first-line supervisors of the departments. In order to structure the communication between the local administrations (the demand) and the **VDAB** (the supply), VDAB–s trainingmanagers developed a simple sheet that make possible to register all necessary agreements that have to be made during the process:
the supervisor of the trainee makes agreements with the trainee on possible topics for a course, the time that can be spent, expected results
the supervisor agrees with the VDAB-instructor on objectives and the time available

3 the instructor makes evaluations during the course and at the end (orally with the trainee and registered on the sheet)

- the supervisor and the trainee make the final evaluation which include new agreements for functioning and further education

Case 7 illustrates the major shilfts in the training strategy and the changing role of the training department in a large organisation. Being situated in a rapidly changing environment, Atea is confronted with an increasing need for very high qualified personnel. Speed, volume and complexity of the needed training have an impact on how training is organised in the company. Three major shifts in training strategy can be identified:

The training department can–t vuild up an –expert—team with trainers attached to the department. Expert-employees, remaining in the operational services are made responsible for training the –non-expert– employees.

Year programs and classical courses have become outdated. The need for individual courses, delivered at the right time and adjusted to the individual needs, requires a complete –rethinking– of how to organise training.

Continuing training becomes more and more a matter of self-development of the organisation. Training department must see it that training budgets are well spent. The role of the training department changes from trainer to facilitator in the field of transfer of knowledge/experience/information.

A.2. Case studies on quality assurance in continuing vocational training in the Federal Republic of Germany

In the course of historical development, because of the very nature of the continuing vocational training system in the Federal Republic of Germany, different forms of quality assurance have emerged which are only valid and justified for certain sub-areas.

The German case study deals with four examples of quality assurance in continuing training from different sectors:

- The "quality order" of the Federal Institute for Labour, which relates to the sponsored continuing training of the unemployed;
- The award of multi-provider quality seals by the "Weiterbildung Hamburg e.V" association;
- The certification of training providers under EN ISO DIN 9000 et seq. by CERTQUA GmbH
- Consumer protection activities: the Goods Testing Institute and the Distance Learning Protection Act.

The effect of the "Quality order" for sponsored continuing training for the unemployed was to tidy up the quality aspects of the training provider scene and increase the suppliers' quality awareness. A good deal of tightening of the supervisory activities of the Federal Institute for Labour was entirely in the interests of the training providers who, after all, have partly developed the quality of their services independently of the requirements laid down by the Federal Institute. Since quality standards essentially verify input quality, their function is primarily to provide information and guidance to the employment offices. To what extent they perform supervisory and selection functions in practice is debated. However, an intensification of the supervisory procedure by the employment offices has resulted in the discovery of various measures which suffer from substantial quality defects. One of the problems with the Federal Institute's quality orders lies in the fact that administrative personnel are responsible for examining teaching activities; an attempt has been made to resolve this dilemma by providing internal training to the employees of the employment offices. It is also regarded as problematical in principle to implement quality standards by means of administrative supervisory machinery alone.

The quality seal award of the Vereins Weiterbildung Hamburg e.V. is based on the model of self-monitoring by training providers. It is assumed that the public propagation of "quality standards in continuing training" and the award of quality seals to date has resulted in an enhancement of the quality of continuing training services in Hamburg. The result of the transparency of the quality criteria has been that consumers of continuing training have reliable guidelines available. The importance of the Vereins Weiterbildung

Hamburg e.V. lies not only in the advisory service it provides to its members, and hence in the creation of uniform quality standards, but also in its consumer advisory service.

CERTQUA GMBH is a joint foundation by the leading German industrial associations (the Federal Union of German Employers' Associations, the German Industry and Commerce Day and the Central Association of German Crafts) and Wuppertaler Kreises e.V. The work done by CERTQUA GMBH and possible additional new foundations with the aim of certifying trading providers under EN ISO 9000 et seq. also helps to make the providers more quality-conscious and results in their setting up quality assurance systems if they want to achieve certification under the ISO. The criticisms levelled at CERTQUA relate to the question of its independence, which is regarded as a problem by the unions. Pluralism among suppliers of certification, however, already exists today; with the wave of ISO certification in the training sector, it is possible that other suppliers - some of them already established in industry - will offer certification services for training providers. Irrespective of this, the question is also debated as to whether, because of the extensive formalism of the ISO certification procedure, rational definitions of quality assurance standards can be expected.

The case studies make it clear that the debate about quality standards and quality assurance systems in continuing vocational training in Germany has progressed in recent times and has produced positive effects on the transparency of continuing vocational training and the quality consciousness of those involved in continuing training. The cases described are quality assurance measures based on active involvement by the players in vocational training and so not jeopardizing the variety and flexibility of the services available. Quality awareness has become more acute among many training providers and participants in continuing training.

A.3. Context and description of quality measures in vocational training in France

A.3.1 The context of the quality question in vocational training in France

The quality issue did not really become a major one in vocational training circles until the late 1980s. It then rapidly became a major preoccupation both for firms who made use of the services provided by the training bodies and to those training bodies themselves and the public authorities. It gives rise to planning and collective efforts, it leads the main players to clarify their strategic orientations and policies, and it results in the setting-up of measures which modify existing practices and potentially carry a powerful capacity for restructuring the available training services.

This increase in the importance of problems associated with quality can be attributed to a number of fundamental changes which training has undergone in France: on the one hand, the dynamic of the construction of a market for the provision of training services; on the other hand, the ascendency of a commercial logic with regard to the training service and the service contract; finally, the differentiated activity of various poles of players in a context in which economic pressures have become much stronger.

Uncertainty regarding quality goes back to the origins of the continuing training system established under the auspices of the Law of 16 July 1971. That Law established compulsory participation in the financing of vocational training and required firms to devote a given percentage of their wage bill to it.

Even when that Law was at the planning stage, it had been noted that contemplating setting up a broadly based training market, funded by a compulsory contribution from employers, while the operators concerned were few in number, had the potential to generate tension. The need to encourage new operators to move into this sector, in the knowledge that the employers' compulsory involvement should have risen from 0.8 % to 2 % of the wage bill between 1972 and 1976, was to result in quantitative targets being given preference at the expense, up to a point, of a more harmonious development of training activity. It was for this reason that bodies which wished to operate in the training market were subjected only to minimal rules governing the exercise of their activities. Those rules are restricted to recording their intent to enter the market (declaration of existence) and to the a posteriori description of the activities they carried out (instructional and financial balance sheet).

Today, the supply of vocational training is characterized by being dispersed or broken up among a large number of training bodies. For the majority of players, their involvement in it is only a secondary activity, their main concern lying elsewhere. Only 15 % of bodies earn the majority of their turnover from vocational training.

The question of the quality of vocational training has gradually become more of a focal point. This is because the imposition of minimal supervisory rules has not really made it possible to ensure transparency in a market which is often considered opaque even by those involved in it. This uncertainty relates not to the training itself, or its utility, but to

its production - to the training bodies which furnish it and the relations between them and the trainees. By the Law of 1990, the legislator made specific efforts to organize the relation between the training body and the trainees, and so laid the initial groundwork for a "consumer right" focused particularly on the teaching contract.

In order to characterize the background to the case studies, the report briefly outlines the changes in position of the main players (firms as the customers for training; the State as the market regulator; and the training bodies as suppliers of training services) relative to the question of quality and the various routes they have followed to arrive at a way of guaranteeing the quality of the training they produce or consume.

A.3.2 The extension factors of quality activities in vocational training

The case studies of firms (large firms and SMEs) and training bodies show that quality activities in vocational training are expanding vigorously today. They are the result of the number of trends which are having a powerful impact on the organization of training by firms or by the State, and on the training services supply structure.

a. The full force of the slowing-down of the economy from the end of 1989 was felt by the service activities, and specifically by training services, which were confronted by stricter conditions in terms of organization and purchase volume by most of those who commission services from them, both in the private and in the public sector. The reduction in the volume of training, the revision of the criteria for awarding contracts, the greater attention paid to verifiable evidence of the quality of the services supplied or their results, and the relative fall in the price of services have created serious tensions in the market, so that some bodies have got into difficulties or gone out of business.

b. These changes have given a powerful boost to collective planning and the implementation of quality measures. The standard apparatus that has been set up is an initial response, but one that is incapable of solving all the problems.

For those who purchase training, greater transparency in the market is appreciated and the pressure they have brought to bear enables them to benefit from a relative drop in prices; it can be noted that greater control over demand, as in large firms or, in the longer term, as in the SMEs, is ultimately reflected by an increase in needs: the firms would like to do more with a reduced budget. The question could then shift away from a focus on the internal organization of the training bodies (the instrumentalization of quality focuses on the provider's organization) towards a concern with quality management which would include the necessities of more efficient provision of services.

c. The case studies show the importance of the changes that have taken place over the last few years:

   - the adoption by large firms, and also by the small and medium-sized enterprises, of devices intended to submit training to quality control. The variety of means selected bears witness to the quest for fine tuning to the specific needs of each of these categories of firm.

- the end of the pioneering era: the instrumentalization of quality by the training bodies is no longer only a differentiation factor but also an essential "survival" reaction in a particularly stretched market. The quality requirement places the emphasis on the transformation of the bodies' internal organization, the ways in which they provide information and, ultimately, their capacity to meet their customers' demands. This transformation goes hand in hand with a transformation of the supply structure characterized, in particular, by a move toward concentration of the training bodies, which have hitherto been very dispersed.
- the quality measures which have been effected and adopted, at least as regards the cases presented here, exhibit a particularly radical cultural change. They all emphasize written procedures, audits based on verifiable documents, etc. There is, then, a relative break with the "oral culture" tradition which characterizes the profession; but the new practices which these measures have generated are also an expression of deep and long-standing arguments which have mobilized the profession. The quality tool seems to adapt particularly well to training, by providing it with management methods and tools which have previously been lacking in a sector initially notable for the academic approach.

Dimitrios Chassapis

A.4 Quality in Continuing Vocational Training in Greece – Summary

A remarkable development of continuing vocational training activities has taken place in Greece during the latest decade due to a growing demand that is mainly being propelled by companies undergoing profound structural, technological and organisational changes and by employees/workers facing the resulting transformations in their professional knowledge, skills and attitudes required for their employment. A complex network of public and private agencies has set up offering vocational training to employed and unemployed persons that is being developed side by side but clearly apart from the formal vocational training system along with the majority of large companies that organises and implements training activities for its personnel.

The expansion and diversification of this informal continuing vocational training network is taken place on a heterogeneous legal ground and in this context as no approval or recognition of the State is required by the providers the continuing vocational training market in Greece is open and is characterised by the multiplicity and diversity of suppliers and supply and by the subsidiary role of the State. Among the continuing vocational training providers are included public authorities and State controlled organisations, universities and educational institutions, professional associations and chambers, organisations set up by employers– and employees– unions, regional and local authorities establishments and private human resources development and training agencies.

Despite however a such considerable expansion of continuing vocational training activities the questions of quality have only recently begun being widely discussed and gaining in importance within the private and public training agencies and especially within the responsible State authorities, notably for reasons of public accountability, training market transparency and training effectiveness given that the majority of the continuing vocational training activities in Greece nowadays are being co-financed by public services and EU–s funds.

In this context five cases representing the national scenery of continuing vocational training and having a direct relation to the training in enterprises or for enterprises and their employees have selected and their applied measures in quality assurance and in the effectiveness evaluation of their training ventures have being concise reported.

The main lines of the debate on the questions of quality in continuing vocational training that is ongoing in Greece nowadays are also being reported in brief. From this debate and from the relevant proposals and plans that are being publicised in its context a common approval of the necessity for establishment of a minimum set of quality standards and of quality assurance systems for the continuing vocational training structures and for the training activities is being got up although not being advocated by identical arguments.

The governmental intervention towards such a direction that has taken place by the foundation of a National Certification Centre of Continuing Vocational Training Structures and the activities that The Vocational Education and Training Organisation (OEEK) is already developing or designing that are strongly shaping the context and the orientation of the current debate on the quality in the continuing vocational training are also being briefly reported.

Besides the most crucial factors that is being got up both from the reported cases and from the current debate and the relevant initiatives that are nowadays taking place in Greece on the quality in continuing vocational training that seems to be considerably confusing the subject matters and at the same time may to be virtually retarding the

application of any befitting measures on the quality assurance in training are being summarised.

Frank Nugent

A.5 Quality Survey of Irish Continuing Training – A survey of continuing training in four Irish companies to determine qualitative and evaluative measures. Summary Report

A.5.1 Introduction

This study is the Irish contribution and response to the call from the European Commission, Task Force Human Resources, Education, Training and Youth for a transnational study of evaluation and quality control in continuing training in small and medium sized enterprises.

This sample study will provide an inventory of measures currently used in Ireland which will inform the wider study of training evaluation procedures and practices used in-company training across Europe.

A.5.2 Quality assurance focus

In selecting four companies which are undertaking training to implement quality assurance of their products and services it was possible to identify were parallels existed with the measures being undertaken by those companies to improve their products and services including the provision of training itself.

It is proposed that from the European survey that a transnational project in The Leonardo Programme could further define best practice in Europe and recommend procedures and practices including any innovative measures.

A.5.3 Evaulation focus

The case studies provide evidence of the evaluation measures actually used in the companies studied. These are summarised in the report findings.

A.5.4 Methodology

The national and regional training awards winners are the focus of this desk study which attempts to filter out the qualitative and evaluative measures in each case.

The study selected four competition entrants and utilised their application forms for the 1993 awards to glean whatever information and insights transpired from each case. By using the same set of questions in each case the study attempts to establish the rationale and implementation of the training process from the stage of identification of training needs, through the training plan development, to the delivery process, and the transfer to the workplace.

The study addresses how in each case evaluation was planned and carried out and the areas of concern and focus in each case study.

Two instruments were used by the study, the National Training Award application form (Appendix 1) and a form devised for this study using the European Commissions Task Force –suggested key questions– (Appendix 2). A matrix was prepared from the second form to aid synthesis.

A.5.5 Summary Findings

Quality Assurance is no longer a –nice to have– feature in the marketplace but a requirement if companies are to continue to trade in the markets of an expanded Europe and worldwide. Quality procedures manuals provide the baseline from which any element can be evaluated on a micro level.

Good evaluation requires accurate reliable information; quality assurance systems provide much more information than was previously available to the training function.

The value of training and the training function as a tool for competitivness is constantly underlinded in this study. The focus on participation and cross-functional project groups to achieve corporate aims is significant and raises the profile of the training function in its role as a change agent and a means of attitude development in an enterprise.

The key function of the accurate identification of training needs and training design is to specify in outcome terms what behavioral changes are required. Deciding how the outcome will be measured at the outset is the key to effective training intervention and evaluation.

Quality assurance accreditation and the certification of training providers is now taking place and is a logical development; it will be used more to aid vendor ratings in the competition between training and education providers to industry.
A common theme runs through these case studies. It is that the development of staff, plus increased employee involvement and customer focus in all aspects of a business are keys to quality and competitiveness.

A.5.6 Recommendations

That a standards specification for training should be included in the ISO 9000 series for initial and continuing training of workers and management in industry and business.
The specification should include minimum standards for the following:

4 Identification of training needs, approved methods and instruments.
5 Training programme specification including model instruments and a section for the specification of personnel involved in human resource provision.
6 Evaluation and quality assurance instruments, including transfer to workplace measurement, financial benefit indicator instruments, assessment and certification specification instruments.

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Paul Jung

A.6. Quality assurance study. National inventory for the Grand Duchy of Luxemburg - summary

In Luxemburg, in the absence of any framework law, the statutory reference framework is constituted by the Law of 4 September 1990 reforming technical secondary education and continuing vocational training, which specifies the private and public bodies empowered to provide continuing vocational training.

There is no obligation on employers to carry out in-house training. The Luxemburg government is in the course of establishing new, high-performance structures of direct value to continuing vocational training.

The Economic and Social Council has drafted an opinion which lays the groundwork for a draft law that will lay down global regulation of the continuing vocational training market in Luxemburg, with particular reference to aspects relating to individual promotion, adult education and continuing vocational training. The Economic and Social Council expects to propose a framework law in this area during 1995-96. The questions raised essentially relate to the following problems:

- the financing of continuing vocational training by firms, employees and the State
- conditions of access to continuing vocational training for all men and women
- the method of protecting the firms' investment in continuing vocational training
- the certification of the training modules

At present, it is the firms which finance the training of their employees. The public authorities finance retraining and refresher courses and general training, and co-finance the training initiatives undertaken by the professional Chambers and aimed at those for whom they are responsible.
As regards financial incentive programmes, decisions are taken from case to case, with the intervention of various ministers (the Minister for National Eductional, the Minister for Economic Affairs and the Minister for Small Firms and Traders). In general terms, the Minister for National Education and Vocational Training has jurisdiction over CVT.

As regards the selection of the various projects, among a sample of 50 firms selected for the study, the decision is based:

- partly on the nature of the firms which undertook the various projects:
- partly by way of in-house training, and
- partly by way of training courses offered by public services or private bodies;
- partly on the fact that the selected projects illustrate certain qualitative approaches, such as, for example:
- instructional approach,
- "made-to-measure" approach,
- integration of training into a strategy of management by objectives,

– integration of training into a strategy of management by principles.

As far as continuing training bodies are concerned, there is evidence of a general trend towards regarding continuing training as a strategic investment by firms in the skills of their human resources.

Along these lines, more and more training bodies are proposing an approach which is tailored to the firms and covers, in particular, the aspects of needs analysis, the planning and implementation of training activities, and an evaluation of those activities.

The essential aspect of quality assurance schemes is focused on the preparation and implementation of training schemes through complete, and indeed sophisticated, specifications, the establishment of coaching after the training courses, the integration of the participants in defining content, experimentation with new teaching techniques and the selection of those responsible for training. These activities are designed to ensure maximum substantive workplace transfer and highlight the absence of reliable evaluation tools which are both inexpensive and easy to employ.

However, there is also evidence of a return to less elaborate specifications, the full versions being considered to be too weighty and/or too expensive as tools to meet the needs, and hence the objectives, of the client firms.

The two cases of in-house training described are not representative of a quality assurance situation in continuing training in Luxemburg. In both the cases described, the needs to be met derive from a translation of the firms' operational and strategic objectives into plans of action which require clearly defined qualifications and so generate an approach whereby existing qualifications are adapted to the target qualifications through individualized training plans. In both these selected enterprises, the approach adopted comprises a specific definition of the objectives to be achieved through training, the preparation of ongoing control during the implementation of the scheme and, a posteriori, an evaluation of the results achieved. In both cases the training is clearly defined as an investment, and those responsible for training act as training consultants.

However, the majority of firms are not yet at this stage of continuing vocational training management. Too often, the activities of the training departments are confined to mere "identification" of needs on the ground, with the establishment of training schemes that have no specific, quantifiable objectives or no relation to the firm's operational objectives, and the buying-in of training from an external body in an attempt to reconcile the identified needs as closely as possible with the needs covered by the services offered by bodies which are active in the market.

Before stressing quality assurance concepts in continuing training, it is absolutely essential to generate awareness of the crucial importance of continuing training in the strategic management of human resources and so, ultimately, in the strategic management of the firm.

In this context, the public arguments relating to the framework law of continuing vocational training and the stepping-up of the activities undertaken in order to make management personnel more aware of continuing training as an investment in the skills of their human resources will certainly help to change the views of the role of continuing vocational training held by the economic actors in the Grand Duchy and, a fortiori, the quality assurance measures which they adopt.

We should note that, even in the present absence of this framework law, the social partners are more and more often including aspects of vocational training in their collective agreements.

Maria Joao Malhiro Filgueiras

A.7. Summary of the report on "Quality assurance in CVT" [Portugal]

A.7.1 Context

It is a matter for the Minister for Employment and Social Security and, within the ministry, the Secretariat of State for Employment and Vocational Training to define employment and vocational training policies. For this purpose, this Secretariat of State receives proposals from the Directorate-General for Employment and Vocational Training and from the Supervisory Body for Employment and Vocational Training. These policies are discussed with the social partners in the context of concerted social planning.

The implementation of these policies is a matter, in the first instance, for the IEFP (Institute for Employment and Vocational Training). This body, which itself undertakes vocational training schemes, also plays an important part as a guarantor of the quality of vocational training undertaken throughout Portugal.

For the implementation of the schemes as such, the IEFP uses its own network of vocational training centres (directly managed or co-managed by it).

Again in the context of government bodies, vocational training is also arranged by various Ministers who control bodies which have jurisdiction to do so.

It must also be emphasized that the firms are nearly all SMEs (about 98 %) who have some difficulties in obtaining access to vocational training. It is always the large firms that make most use of the existing finance.

A.7.2 Case studies

In the cases described, we have tried to give as accurate an impression as possible of the various types of actors who have important parts to play in the field of training.

- 1st case: Renault Portugese, Soc. Ind. e Com., SA

This large multinational enterprise has a training structure and applies to its own vocational training schemes the international rules relating to their design, planning and execution.

This enterprise also applies a policy of upgrading human resources, which is based on training.

- 2nd case: Institute of Banking Training (IFB)

As a training body of the Portugese Banks Association, the IFB is a body in the form of an association.

In fact, it is the most representative body in the field of training for the banking sector, which sector is itself representative of the vocational training carried out in recent years.

- 3rd case: Fund for the Development and Teaching of Engineering, Electrical Technology and Computer Technology (FUNDETEC)

This Portugese group of firms is passing through a period of drastic restructuring, which is being reflected by a streamlining of its workforce.

It has a training structure, which is also undergoing restructuring, and forms one of the major enterprises which are undertaking vocational training schemes. It is appropriate to emphasize that virtually all enterprises in the group are certified as far as quality is concerned.

- 4th case: PORTUCEL - Empresa de Celulose e Papel de Portugal, SA

This foundation was set up by various firms with a view to meeting vocational training requirements as regards new information technologies. It is a representative body in this field, which has the special feature of being associated with universities and firms. It offers its services in the field of training, especially to the associated firms but also to other firms, especially SMEs:

- 5th case: Coopers & Lybrand (Portugal)

This small firm, which has international links, offers consultancy services in the field of vocational training. Its portfolio of customers is divided between SMEs and larger firms.

It is interesting to note that this enterprise has two types of priority as far as quality is concerned: quality of internal procedures and quality of services supplied externally.

This public institution, which is legally independent, has at national level the function of implementing the employment and vocational training policies laid down by the government. To this end, it acts as a promoter of training schemes, supported by its operational network of vocational training centres. It also has the task of managing and supervising the training schemes carried out by those entities which apply for the aid allocated to vocational training. Thus, this institution is doubly preoccupied with quality, as dictated by its function, which derives in particular from its supervisory role and its quality requirements with reference to other Portugese promoters.

A.7.3 Conclusions

A concern with quality assurance is a constant feature of all those involved in the system. Within the enterprises, the procedures are to some extent limited to the procedure of obtaining a certification of the firm under ISO 9000.

We believe that quality assurance has to be considered in the context of the overall training system, and in order to do this it is necessary to take action:

- at the level of reconciling supply and demand, to ensure that the efficiency of training can be maximized. This relates to factors which generate synergistic effects and incentives, and hence result in cost optimization;
- in the training process as such, with activities directed at the trainees, the instructors, methodologies, methods and other teaching resources, the quality of which has to be ensured, especially in the course of the evaluation process;
- in the evaluation and control procedures, which are regarded as sources of feedback and the quality of which reflects the quality of the process itself;
- in the functioning of the training market as such, in terms of the rules to be laid down, relations between "customers" and "service providers", and quality indicators which need to be selected for that purpose.

A.8 The Quality Guarantee in Continuing Training in Spain and Europe – Summary of the Spanish study

Among the Spanish professionals and responsibles of training, there is a wide interest and debate about the concept and necessity of quality guarantee in continuing training. In Spain, this is relatively new, not only in those aspects related to its framework and definition, but also in instrumentation and standardisation.
The Continuing Training in industry has increased considerably in Spain. This important increase becomes apparent, not only by an increment in the expenses and investments budgets, the number of courses and programmes, the volume of training offer, etc., but also by the strategic focus of the Continuing Training in relation to enterprise objectives and its consideration as basic function for the organisation development and competitivity.
In the framework of Force/Eurotecnet 1994 project about Quality Guarantee in Training which takes place in or for enterprises, the Spanish study pretends:

7 to analyse this situation in Spain;
to collect some illustrative cases of the most representative practices in matters related to quality in training; and
8 to collect the worries, suggestions, trends and opinions of the different agents of The Continuing Training.

A.8.1. Some Data About Continuing Training in Spain

As in most of the countries, the Continuing Training in Spain is an organisational function, which develops in a wide framework of free iniciative and market.
In Spain, there is few legislation related to Continuing Training. The main laws and norms are the following: the Labour Workers Statute (1980), the Basic Employment Law (1980), the Decret of Professional Training (1990), the National Programme of Professional Training (1993), and the National Agreement of Continuing Training.
There is neither Spanish legislation about training quality, nor norms to which training departments or organisations which offer training programmes to enterprises and individuals should follow. To this respect, we can only mention the requirements established by INEM for the acknowledgement of the centres which run programmes of Continuing Training within the framework of FIP Plan, or the measures included in the calls of subsidies for Continuing Training of FORCEM about quality of the plans to subsidise.
The different studies developed about the Continuing Training in Spain, show that processes of evaluation are increasingly included in training designs and implementation. However, it is not still stated, neither an approach oriented towards the establishment of –guarantees of quality–, nor a systematic evaluation of the training efficiency and profitability. Very often, the difficulty of the processes and the inadequacy of the available instruments explain this fact.

A.8.2. Studied Cases

It was elaborated a census of 120 institutions and companies from different sectors, regions and characteristics which have services or systems with a recognised development level. It was sent a survey to collect basic information about systems of quality and evaluation of training. The following six cases were selected with formai and operative systems of interest:
AEEDE (Spanish Association of Business Administration Schools): AEEDE is an association made up by the eight most important and acknowledged business schools in Spain. The belonging to AEEDE gives its members recognition of their high level and quality of their training, in Spain and abroad. It has established criteria and standards, which current members or schools trying to enter to the Association should respect.

9 INEM (National Institute of Employment): The INEM develops its training activities in its centres and with its own resources, as well as through the recognised training centres. The study presents the criteria and procedures established for the regulation of centres, programmes and measures of non-presential training.

10 INI-TENEO: TENEO is the largest holding of State Spanish companies. In order to coordinate the policies and criteria which guide the training plans of the corporation companies, it has established a system, presented in this study, to improve the quality levels and productivity of training.

11 DRAGADOS AND CONSTRUCCIONES: It is the most important construction company in Spain. It has recently obtained the ISO 9000 Certificate of Quality. Its training system has been included as one of the procedures evaluated, and it has been considered fitting with the criteria and quality services procedures following ISO Standards. The study summarises the criteria and practices related to evaluation and following of training programmes.

12 TELEFONICA OF SPAIN: Telefónica in the first Spanish company, with a very developed training system. Its model of evaluation and following of training, not only for its technical characteristics but also for its applications, helps to take decisions related to quality and the future development of training plans.

13 DIRFO (Directory of Training): It gives training and human resources managers and professionals information about the Spanish training offer, and about its quality and characteristics. DIRFO has developed two quality systems: One based on the collection of their clients opinion about institutions contracted and their programmes, and another based on the measure of five variables: satisfaction effectiveness, profitability, suitability and trainers performance.

A.8.3. Conclusions

A.8.3.1 Necessity of valid references for training quality

The training in Spain lacks of valid systems to face up to the quality in the continuing training. Every training department or organisation has its own system, more or less developed. At the same time, it is necessary to clarify the training market. During the last years, the training offer has largely increased in Spain, often with a very aggressive marketing, which makes difficult to choose the most suitable and of good quality programmes or services.

A.8.3.2 Definition of the concepts of Guarantee-Quality-Training

There is not a clear definition of these key concepts, so we will have to work in their definition:

14 The training concept increasingly diversifies in self-training, learning organisation, teletraining, advise and consultancy, in-job-training, professional career development, diffuse education, and multiple strategies and activities which have as consequence the adquisition and development of professional and personal competencies.

15 The concept of quality of training, referring, either to the processes, factors and people engaged in training, or to the results and competencies required to assure the effectiveness in the company productivity processes, or to the impact on the competitiveness and the economic results of the company.

16 The concept of Guarantee must be clarified, in order to know if it can be related to the usual concept of guarantee (as it occurs with other products or services), with application of commitments, rules and conditions, or if it is only a psychological and wilful statement.

A.8.3.3 Controversy about certification and standardisation of training

As in other countries, neither in Spain the certification of quality has been implemented in the training institutions. Will this situation be due to the fact that the professional

exercise is more comfortable without any established requirements? Is it convenient to hope that the market laws clarify training offer and classify training institutions following their quality and effectiveness? Don–t we take too many risks, meanwhile, wasting resources, frustrating expectations, damaging the training image? Is this task exclusive of individuals, alone or associated? Doesn–t it be the public powers task to establish or enhance the rules to protect consumers, promote the efficiency of the resources, estimulate the competitivity? Wouldn–t it be appropriate that the State, as it has a subsidiary function, should promote or support projects, related to these aspects, when they have not been developed by private initiatives?

Jan Gibbons

A.9 Quality Assurance of In-Company Training – United Kingdom

A.9.1 Case Study One – Bowles Outdoor Centre

A.9.1.1 Organisation Profile

Bowles Outdoor Centre is a specialist provider of outdoor education, outdoor recreational activities, and personal development/management development and teambuilding courses using the outdoors. It has 16 employees.

Five years ago the Centre focused wholly on the first two activities -outdoor education and recreation. Then the Centre anticipated that the demand for recreational services would start to decline and realised the importance of introducing another market sector. The Centre therefore made a positive decision to make a major strategic change of direction to become a provider of outdoor management and team-building activities.

This involved a substantial change in emphasis. Existing staff were then outdoor specialists and had negligible experience in management development. New skills had to be learnt by the Centre–s staff such as training needs analysis and the ability to review performance of a team and relate the learning points to the working environment.

Before the Centre could start the training process of its staff, a culture change was necessary and a need to demonstrate to staff that different training approaches were possible. This was achieved by a series of exchange opportunities which broadened staff–s perspective.

The second stage was achieved through intensive training development reflecting the experiences that the Centre wished to offer corporate clients. The Centre–s staff also went on industrial secondments. In addition the staff were required to learn management theory and practice and develop classroom tutoring and reviewing skills.

All staff studied for, and achieved, an Institute of Training and Personnel Development qualification. To achieve the qualification staff were assessed on their training skills on a ongoing basis in the working environment by external training providers. In addition internal co-tutoring enabled staff to monitor each others development and share their experiences. As part of the qualification the Centre–s staff were required to undertake an assignment which was presented to and assessed by external qualified management trainers.

A.9.1.2 Quality Assurance

At an early stage in the process of developing a strategic change in direction into management development training the Centre realised that quality assurance of training activities would be vitally necessary.

Quality assurance would prove to clients that a training activity which they might feel was peripheral did in fact have real benefits for the organisation. The Centre also felt that it would help them gain a market advantage in a very competitive market place.

The first step the Centre took towards quality assurance was to pursue ISO9000 part 1. The Centre believes that quality assurance in relation to management development courses means, first and foremost, understanding the needs of the client. Discussion takes place between the client and the Centre to establish as clearly as possible the needs of the team and the objectives of the training. Wherever possible this is done by a visit from one of the tutorial staff to the client–s premises. Ideally members of the team who are to attend the training event are interviewed during the visit.

In writing objectives for a management development course the Centre asks the client to be as specific as possible about their training needs. Wherever possible the Centre encourages the client to use indicators which will enable them to measure changes as a result of the training programme. The use of performance measures provides an automatic

evaluation system and brings it clearly home to participants that the course is about real and measurable change.
The Centre believes that a one off training event is seldom very valuable without a link into an ongoing training process. In fact rather than viewing the event as training the Centre pre[illegible] to think of it as development, where each individual takes a clear responsibility for their own learning and takes it in whatever direction is individually appropriate.
The Centre establishes the link with work at the very beginning of the any management development programme by the use of diagnostic questionnaires. Individuals are asked to formulate their own objectives in relation to the results of the questionnaire. Throughout the management development course reviews relate back to the working environment.
At the end of the course an action planning process takes place in order to transfer the learning points back into the workplace.
Follow up and evaluation then takes place a month or so after the end of the course. Ideally through a personal visit by the tutor to the workplace. The purpose of the visit is to discuss how action plans are progressing, to establish how effective and to what extent the training was in meeting the client–s needs, to evaluate the contribution of the Centre–s inputs and to evaluate performance improvements. If a personal visit is not possible then follow up is carried out through the use of a questionnaire to the client and the individual participants.

A.9.2 Case Study Two: Cleveland Ambulance National Health Service Trust (NHS).

A.9.2.1 Organisation Profile

This case study is about the paramedic training undertaken by Cleveland Ambulance (CA) Service. In Britain national guidelines for the training of paramedic staff are laid down by the National Health Service–s Training Directorate (NHSTD). The nationally prescribed deadlines include a series of timeserving criteria.
The Board of Directors of CA were particularly aware that time serving does not necessarily demonstrate competence. Many people who had served the required time were not capable of attaining the required standard, whilst many of those capable of attaining the required standard had not served the required time.
Aware that National Vocational Qualifications (NVQ) were being developed for ambulance staff CA decided to develop its staff using the draft NVQ standards. CA agreed that the paramedic training would involve trainees undertaking four modules.

A.9.2.2 Quality Assuring The Training

Training for the first two modules is conducted by ambulance instructors. At the end of the training candidates are examined by appropriate hospital medical consultants using verbal and written tests and simulation activities. The examination of trainees by external parties ensures that the objectives and standards set for the training are being met.
During the third module trainees are assessed on their competence through observation in a hospital environment by hospital staff in conjunction with ambulance instructors. The use of hospital staff in assessing a trainees competence in the working environment ensures that training objectives are being met.
The fourth module uses work based training and assessment to demonstrate the trainees competency. At the beginning of this module trainees are assigned to work with a qualified paramedic, who is also qualified, through achieving the Training Development Lead Body standards, as a skills trainer/assessor.
At the beginning of the module the trainee undertakes a self assessment examining the outcomes required to perform their job role and to grade themselves against each element. The trainee and trainer/assessor discuss the outcomes of the self assessment and agree an action plan which sets out how the identified training needs will be met, target dates for completion and the people who will be involved in the training. A record of training

activity is maintained and reviewed. Documentary evidence recording details of a particular incident in which the trainee wishes to claim evidence of achievement and which the trainer/assessor has verified is also kept.
The trainee and trainer/assessor work with each other until such time that both feel that the trainee can provide sufficient evidence to demonstrate competency to a independent internal verifier.
When a trainee has completed the competence based training programme and has been assessed and found competent they are –licensed– by the Cleveland Ambulance Paramedic Advisory Panel to practice as a paramedic. Once the NVQ has been accredited these staff will submit portfolios of evidence for the award of NVQ level IV in Paramedic Skills.

A.9.3 Case Study 3: Walker Financial Solutions Ltd.

A.9.3.1 Organisation Profile

Walker Financial Solutions Limited is a computer software house and systems consultancy, founded in 1985. It develops computer software primarily for financial applications, such as accounting and insurance broking systems. It employs 80 people.

A.9.3.2 Training

The organisation operates in the computer industry where skills are in short supply, and technology is rapidly changing. The nature of the organisation–s products and services require that employees have a high level of technical ability.
By early 1988 the company was finding difficulty in recruiting skilled staff. Existing staff had too few specialist skills to adapt readily to rapidly changing project requirements. The company realised that training and development was needed at all levels to address these problems, and to enable the organisation to achieve increased profitability, efficiency and reduced staff turnover.
In order to meet the organisational needs objectives were established at organisational level for the training and development activities.
At the individual level it was decided to set standards and objectives prior to any training or development activity. Where possible all training was to be linked to certificates of competency and qualifications, including National Vocational Qualifications (NVQs).
A variety of training methods are used to deliver the training. Training methods include training with external providers, structured on the job assignments, workshops, open learning, and management development training in the outdoors. Open learning and self development is also encouraged.

A.9.3.3 Quality Assurance

All training activity is linked to measurable outcomes and to the achievement, where possible, of external standards of competency.
Before any training or development activity, either internally provided or via an external supplier, the individual or group concerned would set a measurable objective(s) with their manager. They also discuss the purpose of the training or development activity. For the training or development activity to be authorised, a business benefit from the activity is identified and the measurable objective(s) set link into this.
Following the training or development activity the manager and individual or group meet to assess whether the objectives have been achieved. Subsequent performance is assessed through observation by the individual–s line manager and self evaluation.
All employees have a performance review every three months based on measurable objectives. During the reviews an evaluation takes place to establish the degree of business benefit achieved through previous training or development activities. Evaluation results are recorded on employee training records and areas for improvement are noted.

Every six months in a interactive process between employee and line manager the employee–s Personal Development Plan is reviewed and the need for further training and development activities are discussed and agreed.
Training suppliers are chosen via a supplier selection procedure, which determines their ability to meet defined objectives for training. After the training, employees are asked to complete a questionnaire evaluating the training provider. The performance of the provider is also assessed through the debriefing process after the training activity, which determines how successful the training was in meeting pre course objectives and business benefit.
All training analysis and evaluation processes have been placed with the company Quality system and ISO 9000, strengthening the quality assurance of training.

A.9.3.4 Benefits

The effects of the training on the organisation has been to fully address the problems of skill shortages. With all staff having undertaken training the company has a highly flexible multi-skilled workforce.
Training has also resulted in clear succession planning. Individuals are identified to assume management positions and all staff realising clear career development paths.

A.9.4 Case Study 4: Training Provider (North Trafford College) and Client/Enterprise (Hays Chemical Distribution Ltd.)

A.9.4.1 Organisation Profile

North Trafford College, Manchester specialises in the delivery of general, vocational and customised programmes of training to Industry, Commerce and Community on a local, national and international basis. The College has achieved ISO 9000.
Hays Chemical Distribution Ltd, Sandbach, is a medium sized manufacturing enterprise producing bulking organic chemicals.The company is currently certified under ISO 9000.

A.9.4.2 Training

This case study is about the implementation of NVQs in Process Operations (Chemical Industries Association (CIA) Scheme) at Hays. Training is provided on site at Hays by North Trafford College specialists. The training is delivered through tutor supported open learning materials developed by the College for Assessor Training.
Choosing North Trafford College as a Provider: The college initially came to Hays attention through recommendation by the CIA, the Industry Lead Body and Employers Association. Discussions took place by telephone, letter and in person between senior college and company personnel in order to determine needs, define training programmes and estimate costs.
Determination of Training Needs: Overall, Company training needs are dictated by strategic policies and the business plan. Training needs are determined on an individual and corporate basis. Individual needs are identified at the recruitment and induction stages through the annual cycle of appraisal. These formal systems are supported informally through the line management structure and day to day operational contact.
The Company operates a long standing internal protocol in the assurance of competence. Each section of the operator–s job is subdivided into a list of composite tasks, recorded in the form of a competence check sheet. Before an operator is allowed to work unsupervised, competence of each task is confirmed and each item on the check sheet –signed off– by a shift manager-foreman. The manager confirms the operator–s competence through observation and questioning. If the operator is found not to be competent in a task, training is given. A complete training record is retained for each employee.

Check-sheet confirmation is also employed when operational aspects of the task change. The check-sheet can also be used as a reminder when the operator has not performed the task for some time.
The company made the decision to implement National Vocational Qualifications for Process Operators in the company.

A.9.4.3 Quality Assurance

Assurance of quality in training is performed by the College and the Company in partnership. Measures are taken by both and independently.
Quality Assurance Measures: Training is organised through the Personnel Department under the auspices of the Personnel Manager. A Company mentor is allocated to each trainee. The mentor supports the trainee through out the programme, monitors progress, quality of delivery etc to the Personnel Manager. Mentors and The Personnel manager review the quality and progress of training formally on a monthly basis and more frequently informally. The Personnel Manager supports trainees through a scheduled contact framework supplemented where needed by additional meetings. Company culture and philosophy facilitates further support to the trainee through open access to in-house expertise. The practise of mutual support and cascading of expertise is well established and genuine interest in the development of personnel is displayed by all levels of management.
College trainers discuss matters of quality and progress with the personnel manager, mentors and students frequently. Feedback between trainer and trainee is continuous. The Company provides a full compliment of resources to support trainees e.g. training facilities, text books/ work manuals, stationery etc in order to help make the learning as barrier free as possible. Tutor marked assignments are channelled through the Personnel Manager to trainees. In this way, progress is further monitored, deadlines adhered to and extra help provided if needed. Counselling, to combat the fear of learning often experienced in mature trainees long past compulsory and initial formal education, is provided by both tutors and the Personnel Manager.
Throughout the training programme skills and knowledge are tested and confirmed by tutors and through the company system of skill check-sheet completion.
During the life of each training programme, Quality Assurance questionnaires are completed by company personnel and returned to the college. Any areas for improvement identified by the questionnaires are actioned.
Senior college personnel maintain regular personal contact with the company. This liaison supports the Quality Assurance function and also alerts the college to possibilities to tender for future provision of training.
At the college, specialist trainers are managed directly by a Section Leader who, in turn, reports to the Director of Faculty. Section Team Meetings are held weekly to ensure that quality issues receive high priority. In addition, Section Leaders review and discuss progress with the Director of Faculty each week. Where needed, feedback between all personnel is arranged.
At the end of each training programme a comprehensive process of –Course Review– is undertaken. The process explores all aspects of the programme, judges summative success and leads to the formation of an action plan for the future. Company feedback forms an integral part of the review process.
Outcomes of Training: The major effect is the acquisition of a trained, competent workforce. Qualification successes have remained high and progress on target.

17 For the Company: Intrinsic changes in attitude have been noted and often led to the desire in the workforce to continue to learn. Trainees want to progress to higher levels of qualification and maximise their potential. Failure has been reduced e.g. plant is operated more productively. Employees show greater interest in performing their work.

18 For the College: Pleasure and satisfaction gained through success and through securing success in others is a great motivator for trainers. The close relationship

with the Company provides mutual knowledge of culture, needs and understanding. Success breeds success and helps to ensure the future of the College service.

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